International Quality Review of Gulf Medical University

April 2021

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) of Gulf Medical University. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions the review visit meetings were conducted virtually, in all other respects the review was conducted according to the published guidelines. The review took place from 19 to 22 April 2021 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Sarah Bennett (student reviewer)
- Professor Emeritus Ian Giles
- Mr Ian Kimber.

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

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

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

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review[3] and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms, see the Glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/training-and-services/iqr

Key findings

Executive summary

Gulf Medical University (GMU) was established in 1998. It offers Medical and Health Professional Education in the fields of Medicine, Biomedical Sciences, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Nursing, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Anaesthesia Technology, Medical Imaging Sciences, and Healthcare Management & Economics. GMU offers postgraduate programmes in Precision Medicine, Public Health, Dental Surgery in Endodontics & Periodontics, Physical Therapy, Medical Laboratory Sciences, Clinical Pharmacy, Drug Discovery & Development, Health Professions Education, and Healthcare Management & Economics. In addition, the University also offers Short Term Certificate Courses for Health workforce development and career enhancement.

GMU is owned and operated by the Thumbay Group - a business conglomerate with a diverse range of business interests and with headquarters in Dubai. Significant to GMU and its context are the Healthcare, Medical Research, Diagnostics, Retail Pharmacy and Health Communications components, which ensure GMU has access to its own network of hospitals, clinics and institutes.

GMU's vision is 'To be a leading international Academic Healthcare Institution through the integration of quality health professions education, research, healthcare and social accountability for sustainable community development.' Its mission is stated as being 'To pursue excellence through integration of health professions education, translational research, quality healthcare, innovation and social accountability enhanced by national, international partnerships and community engagement.'

GMU is located across a 25-acre main campus located in Ajman. It is networked with Thumbay Hospitals, Thumbay Clinics and Thumbay Pharmacies for the medical internship programme. The main campus constitutes the university main building, including laboratories, classrooms, offices, colleges/departments, library and learning centre, Thumbay Diagnostic Centre, Centre for Advanced Simulation in Healthcare (CASH), Innovation and Research Centre, Coffee Shop, Restaurant, Health Club, Indoor and Outdoor Sports Complexes, Health Communication Department, ATM, conference rooms and resource centres.

The university programmes are accredited by the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through the Commission of Academic Accreditation (CAA). All programmes are recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and listed in the WHO Directory of Medical Schools and IMED under the auspices of Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER). It has graduated approximately 2200 graduates.

GMU, like all educational institutions worldwide, has, in the period leading up to this review had to react to a rapidly developing context resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In sustaining its education provision, it has adapted existing learning and teaching methods and developed new modes of delivery including digital and blended learning approaches. The continuing demand for healthcare education across the world places increasing demands for appropriate clinical education settings and GMU is not immune from these pressures. Its close integration with the Thumbay facilities mentioned above goes some way to ameliorating these pressures.

The QAA review team was provided with a self-evaluation document and an extensive set of documentary evidence by GMU. The review team also held virtual meetings over four days with the Chancellor of GMU, senior staff, academic staff, support staff, students, graduates,

providers of clinical placements and employers. The team also had the opportunity to view videos of the range of facilities and resources available on campus.

In summary, the team found examples of significant good practice and was able to make some recommendations for improvement. With regard to significant good practice, the team identified three key areas. The first of these relates to the way GMU takes steps to ensure that it incorporates an external perspective on its activities - both through the use made of external examiners and more broadly through its engagement with the external healthcare education community to ensure the validity of assessment standards and the benchmarking of its educational provision. The second area of good practice identified by the team concerns the very wide range of opportunities students have to provide feedback on their overall learning experience and the fact that this has demonstrably had a positive impact. Finally, GMU has developed a portal, provided through the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness Unit, that provides all staff at all levels readily accessible data and information that is essential for the monitoring of student progression and achievement and the wider evaluation of programme effectiveness.

The review team also made some recommendations. All of the recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are designed to build on situations which are operating satisfactorily but could be improved or enhanced. There are four recommendations. The first recommends that GMU introduces training and development for student representatives engaged in quality assurance. The team recognises that GMU encourages student representation in the governance of the University and in quality assurance procedures. However, students have the potential to make a more effective contribution if they are provided with a consistent and structured approach to their preparation for their role as representative. The second recommendation also relates to the student voice, and recommends the University employs a broader range of methods for obtaining student feedback. Currently, the predominant method is that of the formal survey using questionnaires. Obtaining feedback through a variety of methods would enrich the feedback obtained and allow for more in-depth understanding of underlying meaning.

The third recommendation made relates to the diversity of the students studying at the University, including people of determination. The review team recommends that the University clarifies the support available to students and make sure that information that is available is also readily accessible.

The fourth and final recommendation is associated with the University's approach to benchmarking. The review team concluded that the University was making extensive use of benchmarking but that a more strategic approach could be adopted to what is to be benchmarked, appropriate levels of attainment and the use made of external input to the process, particularly with regard to international partnerships.

Overall, the team concluded that Gulf Medical University meets all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance.

QAA's conclusions about Gulf Medical University

The QAA Accreditation Panel reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Gulf Medical University.

European Standards and Guidelines

Gulf Medical University meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Gulf Medical University.

- The effective use made of external examiners, and externality more broadly, in assuring assessment standards and external benchmarking (Standard 1.3 and 1.9).
- The multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback has positively impacted on their overall learning experience (Standard 1.7).
- The Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness portal, which provides staff at all levels easy access to data and information critical to monitoring many aspects that impact on student progression, achievement and evaluation of programme effectiveness (Standard 1.7, 1.9, 1.10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Gulf Medical University.

Desirable:

- Introduce training and development for student representatives engaging with quality assurance processes (Standard 1.2).
- Employ a broader range of methods in the acquisition of student feedback (Standard 1.7).
- Clarify the support available to diverse students and people of determination and ensure that this information is easily accessible (Standard 1.8).
- Develop a strategic approach to benchmarking that defines what is to be benchmarked, level of attainment and the use to be made of external input, with particular reference to international partnerships (Standards 1.9 and 1.10).

Explanation of the findings about Gulf Medical University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

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

Standard 1.1   Policy for quality assurance

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

Findings

1.1	Gulf Medical University's (GMU) Quality Assurance Framework is set out within its Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness Manual. Underpinning the Quality Assurance Framework is the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness Policy. Both are aligned with the five-year University Strategic Plan. Each college develops its own strategic plan and objectives which are aligned with the institutional strategic plan. Implementation of the plans is monitored through the annual university/college planning process, and the University Council has in its Terms of Reference: 'To oversee quality assurance and quality implementation in relation to the academic functions of the University.' GMU has a number of key drivers relating to quality in the strategic plan including: the quality of programmes, faculty and students; the quality of research; and the effectiveness of the quality assurance mechanisms used.

1.2	GMU defines quality as efficiency in operations and achievement of high-quality outcomes, and clear identification of goals as the essential starting point. Quality assurance is applied in three main areas: the quality assurance system and quality assurance infrastructure; academic activities; and administrative support functions.

1.3	Quality Assurance at GMU supports the systematic and ongoing development of quality within the scope of its academic and administrative functions. The Self Evaluation Document (SED) states that the GMU Quality Assurance Policy aims to provide guidance on the development and implementation of quality assurance and institutional effectiveness procedures and practices and to facilitate a culture of continuous quality improvement in the University.

1.4	GMU explained to the team that it also adopts a quality enhancement approach, which is a continuous improvement process in relation to all of its operations. For GMU, quality enhancement is based on feedback and analysis of data, and where quality assurance always relates to specific standards, the University aims to go beyond the standards.

1.5	GMU uses a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) of institutional effectiveness at the university, college and administrative support levels, under the Input, Process, Output, Outcome (IPOO) Model. Benchmarks are set for performance in different areas to meet the standards listed in the United Arab Emirates Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) Manual.

1.6	GMU encourages sharing its KPI data across different CAA standards with other higher education institutions as one of its benchmarking practices. The University has shared data on various KPIs including student graduation rates, student attrition rates, student retention rates, student participation and faculty retention rates, among others.

1.7	In January 2020, GMU refreshed its organisational structure and established a new position of Vice-Chancellor for Quality and Global Engagement (VCQGE) to lead and coordinate quality enhancement activity across the University. The VCQGE is supported by the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness (QA&IE) Unit; the University QA&IE

Committee; and the college-level Quality Assurance and Programme Evaluation Committees.

1.8   The QA&IE Unit aims to provide evidence that demonstrates institutional effectiveness by systematically evaluating academic provision and its academic, student and administrative support services. The outputs from these processes inform planning, resource allocation and enhancement activities.

1.9   The University QA&IE Committee is chaired by the VCQGE and the members are the chairs of the Quality Assurance and Programme Committee (QA&PE) Committees of each college. The Director of the QA&IE Unit is also a member.

1.10   The college QA&PE Committees are composed of faculty members representing associated departments. Students are also represented. The Committee structure aims to support an integrated quality assurance framework at college and university levels and to facilitate effective communication channels.

1.11   GMU evaluates the quality and effectiveness of the institutional governance and management structures including services through an annual online employee satisfaction survey. The QA&IE Unit administers the survey.

1.12   As part of GMU's ongoing quality enhancement of its services, in 2020 the QA&IE Unit established an online platform designed to align its structure with the CAA Standards to facilitate tracking and enhancing performance aspects of GMU's activities. The key elements include: educational programmes; faculty; students; research; community engagement; records of reports and minutes; and policies and procedures.

1.13   During discussions at the virtual site visit, the review team found evidence of how the quality assurance framework links to the national context and the University's strategic plan, combining compliance with CAA requirements and effective application on the ground. There is a good line of sight between the highest level of strategy and its application at college, programme and course level. This is facilitated through the development of college-level plans mentioned above that are regularly monitored and reported on. Each college has to complete an annual operational report in which it sets out what has been achieved in terms of the strategic plan, and this is submitted to the QA&IE department. Each college has a quality assurance member of staff who leads on quality assurance. All quality assurance staff members meet to monitor cross-institution matters. In this way, a balance between centralised and localised quality assurance is achieved and both good practice and challenges are shared.

1.14   Discussions with staff and students confirmed that the University supports and encourages the development of a quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for and engage with quality assurance. There was good awareness of the core elements that formed the quality assurance framework, and roles and responsibilities for quality assurance are well understood throughout the institution, at all levels, including students, academics and professional staff.

1.15   The team saw evidence that the QA&IE Unit works effectively with the University QA&IE Committee and college-level QA&PE Committees to implement the policies and procedures in the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness Manual and the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness Policy.

1.16   There is also evidence of involvement of a range of external stakeholders in quality assurance, but the review team concluded that this could be more systematically codified (see paragraph 9.16).

1.17   GMU's development and use of KPIs to assess effectiveness is creditable. However, the review team saw that some of the KPIs are set very high and have not been attained - for example, in relation to attrition and retention, and satisfaction with student services - and would encourage the University to consider both the feasibility and effectiveness of this approach to targets (see also paragraphs 7.13 and 9.2).

1.18   GMU has a Student Academic Integrity Policy which aims to set out a clear and consistent process for investigating suspected academic misconduct by students, clarify the authority to deal with cases of alleged academic misconduct, codify possible penalties, and ensure that reporting, recording, confidentiality and appeals in the case of confirmed academic misconduct are handled effectively and consistently. The University has also taken several actions to combat academic misconduct such as empowering the role of mentors and academic advisers to inform students clearly about their roles and responsibilities. The GMU approach to academic integrity was discussed at the site visit, and the University flagged that they want to move to a more preventative approach. The review team supports this and encourages GMU to go further to combat academic misconduct, through preventative measures, such as assessment strategies, to balance detection and deterrence approaches.

1.19   In conclusion, GMU has quality assurance policies and procedures that contribute to the accountability of the institution, support the development of a quality culture and translate into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance is therefore **met**.

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

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

Findings

2.1   The CAA is the UAE Federal Government's quality assurance agency for higher education. All programmes offered by GMU are accredited by the CAA and are aligned to the National Qualifications Framework. CAA also grants Institutional Licensure to UAE institutions and GMU has been licensed by the CAA since 1998 and was relicensed in 2019.

2.2   The University QA&IE Committee was established to strengthen the internal process of new programme development. The Committee is responsible for reviewing the Initial Programme Accreditation (IPA) applications to the CAA and the college responses to the External Review Team (ERT) requirements before submission to the CAA (see paragraphs 2.4-2.5 below for more on the ERT).

2.3   GMU has a policy and procedures for programme planning and development which are aligned with GMU's mission and strategic plan. Proposals for new programmes must be initiated by the relevant college. An initial draft proposal is considered by the University Council and the Board of Trustees. The draft proposal includes information on learning outcomes; initial study plan; planned student enrolments; and the availability of resources. If approved, a feasibility analysis is undertaken including market analysis, potential student profile, competing programmes and institutions, and a financial analysis. Based on the findings of the feasibility analysis, an Initial Programme Accreditation (IPA) application is prepared by the respective college and reviewed by the college QA&PE Committee. The IPA application must address a number of elements, including: governance and management; quality assurance; educational programmes; research and scholarly activity; students; and faculty and professional staff; learning resources; and community engagement. The IPA application is then reviewed by the University QA&IE Committee. In addition to the internal GMU review processes, the proposed programme is reviewed by external stakeholders including the relevant college Advisory Board and international experts. Upon approval by the QA&IE Committee and the VCQ&GE, the application is considered by the Vice-Chancellor Academic (VCA). If approved by the VCA, the IPA Application is submitted to the CAA for initial accreditation.

2.4   The CAA assigns an ERT that includes international experts in the relevant subject area. The ERT reviews the IPA application and may request additional supporting documentation. The ERT undertakes a site visit to GMU and meets faculty, prospective students, administrators, and heads of academic service departments. The site visit also includes a tour of the GMU campus and facilities.

2.5   Based on virtual or onsite visit and examination of the application documentation, the ERT prepare a report which is submitted to GMU. The Programme Director coordinates the GMU response to the ERT report in conjunction with the college QA&PE, the University QA&IE Committee and the QA&IE Unit. The GMU response will then be submitted to the CAA. When the CAA is satisfied that all requirements have been addressed, the CAA will send an official accreditation letter to the institution.

2.6   GMU encourages and supports faculty and professional staff to contribute to programme design and approval. Faculty are members of the stakeholder forum and other committees such as college curriculum committees that review new programme developments.

2.7   A decision to close a programme (or branch campus or institution) at GMU is guided by the 'Teach-out Policy'. GMU would then consult key stakeholders, including students, and review alternative options to closure. If closure is unavoidable, the CAA and Ministry of Education are advised. Arrangements to support students who have not completed their programme are in place and the students will be advised by faculty or professional counsellors regarding suitable options, including transferring to similar programmes.

2.8   GMU has partnered with a number of other higher education institutions in academic initiatives, such as reviewing programme self-study reports, providing feedback and, in some cases, contributing to the development, delivery and assessment components of the curriculum. These include UAE and international institutions. A further key source of external advice is the GMU Advisory Board, providing advice and advocacy to assist the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellors and Deans to develop GMU and its programmes. The advisory board comprises experts from academia and industry.

2.9   There are a number of avenues for students to give input and be involved in programme development and review. Students are members of the college and university standing committees like College Council, Curriculum Committee and QA&PE Committee. Student views are also incorporated in programme evaluation. Students confirmed that their 'voice' is listened to, and they are encouraged to suggest ways of improving or developing courses. Academic staff provided examples where student feedback has led to enhancements to the curriculum and/or improved instructional delivery.

2.10   The review team sees the range of avenues for student input to review and development processes, and quality assurance in general, as a positive enhancement of their learning experience (see paragraphs 7.4 and 7.12 below). Nonetheless, the team feels this could be further developed by providing a coordinated and focused approach to developing the skills and competencies for this important participation and input across a broad range of students. The University is therefore **recommended** to introduce training and development for student representatives engaging with quality assurance processes.

2.11   Programme development and review processes draw on measures of need from the market, national skills needs and emerging trends in the disciplines and practices (examples the team heard about included big data and technology in health care). Stakeholder input and involvement helps ensure programmes are up-to-date with current practice and scholarship, and meet the needs of employers and the community. The review team heard how major employers of GMU graduates have input to programme design. As mentioned above, GMU also has international partners that contribute to programme development and review, including through joint programmes and collaborations with, for example, the University of Arizona and the Virginia Commonwealth University in the US.

2.12   The team heard from senior and academic staff that programme development and review is a mix of top-down and bottom-up processes, where strategic needs are taken into account.

2.13   Internal stakeholders, such as administrative and student support and Learning Resources staff, have appropriate input to the processes. During the virtual site visit, the team was told of a continuous connection between student, faculty and library that informs course and programme development and review. The E-learning Manager is a member of the Library Committee and the Curriculum Committee so plays a critical role in ensuring that

e-learning is discussed and developed. Any new programme that is introduced involves meetings with all services to discuss the implications of introducing the new programme, to ensure all necessary services to support it are in place.

2.14   GMU programmes are designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme is clearly specified and communicated and refers to the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework for higher education. They are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work and benefit from external expertise and reference points. The 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

3.1   The GMU Teaching and Learning Methodologies policy requires the use of pedagogical approaches that are learner-centred and inclusive. The curricula of programmes reviewed involve a variety of teaching modalities with student-centred interactive sessions given priority. The Student Handbook and the examples of Course Files seen demonstrate that student-centred approaches are encouraged.

3.2   Each programme has a Programme Specification to provide prospective students, current students, staff and other interested parties (for example, external examiners and reviewers) with details of the learning outcomes, programme structure, teaching approaches, assessment methodology, available student support, information regarding admission, learning resources, methods of evaluation, and indicators of quality mapped to the UAE CAA standards. There is a programme catalogue containing details similar to the Programme Specification, but with more supporting narrative that is accessible from the student VLE (called MyGMU). The Student Handbook is also available on MyGMU.

3.3   The Course Syllabus Policy requires the syllabus of each course (modules) to be shared through MyGMU. The Course Syllabus also serves as the contract between the instructors and the students regarding the course content, the learning opportunities and the assessment methods employed. There is also a policy on Course Files that details the documentation required to ensure that there is sufficient information for a non-instructor to evaluate the effectiveness of the course.

3.4   Student evaluations take place in the middle and at the end of each semester, which, together with an exit survey at the end of the programme, contributes to information on the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. The final high stake summative examination is mapped to the Programme Learning Outcomes.

3.5   A range of learning and teaching methodologies are employed to encourage student-centred learning. Of particular interest are case-based discussions, problem-based learning, and an award-winning artificial intelligence-driven Virtual Patient Learning system that is modelled on problem-based learning. In the pre-clinical practical components, the default educational method is simulation-based training. Clinical training takes place in authentic clinical settings, with many of the laboratories and clinical training sites being shared across the different programmes.

3.6   As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increase in the use of online learning with students still permitted to undertake on-campus practical clinical sessions. The online technologies used encompass both synchronous and asynchronous approaches. All synchronous sessions were recorded and posted to the MyGMU. The recently introduced E-Learning Policy states that e-learning modalities should be used when most appropriate for student learning, with implementation being a shared responsibility between the University, faculty and students. GMU has recently established a Distance Learning Committee (DLC) to follow up on the implementation of all learning activities taken at a distance. This committee has many other responsibilities including advising colleges and programmes on the technology best suited to the programme-specific learning outcomes, selecting best practices and sharing across programmes.

3.7   GMU has a policy on Continuous Enhancement of Programme Effectiveness. At the end of each semester, faculty prepares a SWOT analysis for the Course File, which requires reflection on the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment methods in the course. Faculty also reflects on data produced by the University - for example, the summary analysis of student performance in examinations prepared by the Office of Assessment and Evaluation, helping identify areas that need to be improved. This activity, together with the observation and discussion required by the Peer Assessment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement policy and the feedback from students and other stakeholders, requires all staff to reflect regularly on their personal performance. The team concluded that the use of reflection and the evaluation of professional practice in their procedures enables subsequent iterations of the course to show continuous improvement and demonstrated improving student satisfaction scores.

3.8   Some colleges benchmark the ability of their graduating students against international norms. For example, the College of Medicine employs the International Foundations of Medicine Examination offered by the US National Board of Medical Examiners enabling the college to benchmark their graduating students against a group of international comparator schools.

3.9   Students reported that they thought their studies at the University prepared them for employment, and alumni said their studies at the University had helped them through the transition into employment. This was confirmed by employers, who made very positive comments about the practice readiness and competency of GMU graduates. They praised the effectiveness of the educational experience that produced graduates who possessed well-developed clinical skills and who were able to learn new skills very quickly. One example given by employers was of two students being given responsibilities above their expected status.

3.10   Workshops are provided by both the University and individual colleges on pedagogical topics that have included distance education, formative and summative assessment, the conduction of webinars, and the use of Moodle.

3.11   Financial support (50% of fees) is provided to staff who undertake the GMU Joint Master's in Health Professions Education programme that focuses on pedagogy in the medical and health sciences. As a consequence, many of the faculty have completed, or are undertaking, this programme. A number of staff have published articles on medical education since 2016.

3.12   Academic advisers and mentors have a responsibility to advise and monitor their students on all matters related to their programme of study and to aid them engage with the learning opportunities provided. The regular meeting of students with their mentor through the Mentorship Scheme also help students understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided. These meetings are documented and tracked by the Student Affairs Office.

3.13   GMU has a Grading and Assessment policy to ensure assessment, grading and moderation are consistent across all programmes and appropriate for the nature and level of each course, content and mode of delivery. In common with dental, medical and healthcare programmes elsewhere, GMU has adopted a competency-based approach to their curricula and assessments. The review team saw examples of the pattern of assessment mapped for each course and through the entirety of the programme.

3.14   GMU has clear policies for the Recognition of Prior Learning and Transfer Admission to assure themselves that any student entering through either of these pathways is able to demonstrate meeting all learning outcomes. GMU also has an Advance Standing

policy to enable applicants with work or other similar experience to provide non-certificated evidence that they can demonstrate meeting specific competencies and learning outcomes.

3.15   As confirmed by students, at the first session of a course, the coordinator goes through the course syllabus and discusses the learning outcomes and assessments in detail. Faculty involved in grading and assessment are guided by clear rubrics and blueprints to ensure alignment of the assessment tasks with learning outcomes, which are shared with students on MyGMU. The learning outcomes are presented in the domains of Knowledge, Skills and Areas of Competence. Students confirmed that everything is made clear to them in writing.

3.16   It is evident that, through the use of blueprinting, each of the course learning outcomes is linked to one or more assessment tasks and that the programme-level learning outcomes are mapped to those of each course to ensure that, on completion of the programme, all learning outcomes have been assessed. In addition, the blueprints of the high stakes exit examination directly demonstrates the link between these final examination tasks and the programme learning outcomes.

3.17   GMU has a Test Centre that administers examinations centrally for all programmes and has the facilities to conduct online assessments in a secure environment for up to 100 students at a time. This centre also provides logistic support in preparing reports and analysis of the various formats of assessment delivered. They have also created a bank of questions and use an examination management software system.

3.18   Each college has an Assessment Committee that is responsible for producing the examination schedule, and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of assessment processes within the college using the Learning Assessment improvement cycle. The committee also considers and moderates questions when needed, reviews the post-examination test-item analysis report and decides whether to retain, revise or discard each item. Rubrics, blueprints and the routine use of more than one examiner all add to making the assessments fair, valid and reliable.

3.19   Students receive different types of feedback during their learning depending on the learning modality. This can be immediately, in practical and clinical situations, or more traditional feedback after formative assessments that include online quizzes. Students also receive feedback on summative assessments within a week. Following clinical Objective Structured, Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), students get very structured feedback. For example, the review team heard details of an approach used by the College of Pharmacy that relies on early diagnosis before failure. Similarly, the College of Dentistry uses formative assessment to help identify individual students who need further support at an early stage. The College of Nursing uses clinical evaluations conducted at the end of each clinical rotation to give feedback to students so that they can improve their skills and competencies.

3.20   In 2020, GMU established a Student Happiness Centre with a range of responsibilities including being the first point of contact for students in each college to provide advice and support, and to direct students to other services in the University and the healthcare system (for example, counselling) when required. The Student Happiness Centre has a programme called 'Together We Rise' aimed at weaker students being provided with support and tutoring from higher achieving students.

3.21   GMU employs external examiners for every programme for the final high stakes (summative) examinations. The external examiners are also required to comment on the programme as a whole. External examiners are also a requirement for every thesis defence. The team heard from a member of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), USA, that they have been impressed with the culture of quality in GMU that it has the best assessment quality in the region. The review team considers the effective use made

of external examiners, and externality more broadly, in assuring assessment standards and external benchmarking to be **good practice**.

3.22   All written assignments are submitted through plagiarism-detection software. There is an Academic Misconduct policy explaining the process to investigate academic misconduct (including cheating, fabrication and plagiarism). GMU also has policies on Student Academic Integrity and Student Rights and Responsibilities. Academic integrity is organised at every course level, and students are reminded of the expectations of them in the Student Handbook.

3.23   As a Medical University, GMU takes professional behaviour very seriously. The process starts when students are initiated into their professions, with everyone taking an honour code that covers professional behaviour. As noted in paragraph 1.18, the team heard of actions taken to minimise academic misconduct, including using the mentorship programme and informing students about their responsibilities. The Chancellor explained that, until recently, the University had adopted more of a therapeutic approach, that is one based on providing regulations and punishing offenders when discovered. A shift has started to move towards a preventative approach which requires a change in attitude of students and staff, underpinned by strengthening the links to professional ethics.

3.24   There is a Grade Approval and Change policy and a supporting process for students seeking a grade change. The Student Grievances policy is handled by the University Office of Student Affairs who maintain a log of complaints lodged, the steps taken to resolve the complaint and the final decisions/actions taken. There are stated time frames for the various steps to be completed. Each year, the Office of Student Affairs produces an annual report.

3.25   As well as having an open-door culture, students are represented at all levels of institutional governance, and students from the different colleges are represented on the Student Council. As discussed elsewhere (paragraph 7.4-7.5), student surveys evaluate courses, programmes and staff, and there is also an employer's survey. The results of these are analysed by the QA&IE Unit and considered at each college QA&PE Committee.

3.26   The review team concludes that the delivery of programmes encourages students to be active learners with assessments that allow them to demonstrate the achievement of stated learning outcomes. Alumni and employers confirmed that GMU prepared its students well for employment and, therefore, Standard 1.3: Student-centred Learning, Teaching and Assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

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

Findings

4.1   GMU provides information regarding its higher education provision in a number of ways, including the GMU website, social media, and online video marketing materials. Comprehensive information regarding admissions, GMU's vision and goals, student finance, student services and student rights is provided to students in the pertinent Programme Catalogue, which is available on the college website.

4.2   Access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. The GMU Office of Admissions and Registration is responsible for the coordination of recruitment activities. In partnership with the business development division and finance, the Office of Admissions and Registration works with GMU and its colleges to identify admissions statistics, and to enhance the marketability of its programmes. There are a number of policies outlining GMU's approach to student admissions, all of which are available on the college website, including the Undergraduate Admissions Policy and Graduate Admissions Policy.

4.3   The review team confirmed the effectiveness of the University's application of their own predefined and published regulations, undertaking discussions with students and staff to cover all phases of the student experience, including student admissions, progression, recognition and certification. The team also examined the relevant documents for each phase of the student journey.

4.4   An all-inclusive institution induction and orientation programme is provided to students, including tours of the campus, facilities, and the Thumbay University Hospital. Students confirmed induction programmes as comprehensive, particularly when on clinical rotation placements.

4.5   Appropriate procedures are in place for the recognition of prior learning (RPL), in accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention. These are the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, and Transfer Admissions Policies. The award of academic credit for previous study, or advanced standing, provides a framework for the award of academic credit for prior formal and informal learning. Advanced standing is not applicable for higher degrees (M-level and above), and the maximum number of credits transferred cannot exceed 50% of the total credits of the programme study offered. These policies and procedures are in compliance with the Standards for Institutional Licensure and Programme Accreditation (2019), published by the CAA.

4.6   Responsibility for informing prospective students of RPL lies with the Admissions Department. Staff described how RPL credits are matched before admission, before being presented to the Advanced Standing Committees, the relevant faculty and subsequently the Dean of that faculty. This follows the guidelines of the CAA. An assessor evaluates the submitted RPL documents and completed forms. If successful, RPL certified units are added to the student's Record of Result. Specially trained admissions officers participate in the final decision regarding the award of academic credit for RPL and Advanced Standing assessments.

4.7   Admissions appeals and complaints processes are outlined in the respective admissions policies, which state that a signed letter must be sent to the Admissions

Department within two working days. These are also available under the general Admissions Requirements on the GMU website. Students described an informal approach to complaints due to the openness of university staff; typically approaching either their professor or the college Dean in-person if they had reason to complain, depending on the college.

4.8   There are clear mechanisms in place to ensure the support of students throughout the student 'life cycle'. Academic Advising and Mentorship programmes are in place, to advise and guide students to achieve academically, with a particular focus on careers support. Academic advisers are responsible for providing academic advice, selecting electives, counselling regarding academic difficulties and monitoring the student's academic progress. Students confirmed that they were assigned a mentor on enrolling on their programme. Mentors are responsible for both academic and personal progress and are typically located outside of the student's area of study to avoid any potential conflict of interest. Students have the option of having the same mentor as they progress through their education each year or have the option to change their mentor at the start of each academic year. Student feedback in an annual satisfaction survey regarding the academic advising and mentorship scheme was very positive, praising the availability of their mentor and their professionalism.

4.9   On clinical rotation, students are also provided with a mentor and clinical preceptor, who they are welcome to contact if they encounter any issues while on clinical placement. During the 35-week Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) rotations, students complete daily logs regarding their progress on placement on the MyGMU pages. In all other placement activities, feedback to students is provided verbally by their clinical tutor.

4.10   Comprehensive processes collect, monitor and act on student achievement and progression. Each course has Grading, Assessment, Progression and Completion policies for each programme, which follow the University Grading and Assessment policy. Staff also described how each college has an Assessment Committee, which tracks and is responsible for moderation of all assessment processes. The Assessment Committee meets monthly, and reports to the Associate Dean of Academics. In accordance with GMU policy, students receive feedback regarding their assessments and progression within one week. If timely turnaround of feedback to students is not achieved, the relevant Head of Department meets with the marker to discuss any barriers to completion. Staff also described how ePortfolio was used to focus on student learning and outcomes, with external review by the CAA to give feedback on the quality of teaching and learning.

4.11   Students are permitted to retake courses where they have scored a Grade D or D+, a maximum of two times for each course, in accordance with the Grading and Assessment Policy. These results are documented on their official student transcript. Staff described how students who were falling behind academically were given the option to repeat assessments. In addition, the student's academic adviser would be consulted, in order to consider and examine any reasons why at-risk student may be falling behind academically. Staff described the implementation of study plans for failing students, in a supportive effort to improve their progress.

4.12   On completion of their course, students are provided with a record of their studies in the form of an official transcript, detailing course hours, credit hours, grades and their cumulative Grade Point Average. An exit survey also asks recent graduates to give their opinion regarding their educational experience and its relevance, with an analysis of outcomes presented in the University annual report.

4.13   The University has appropriate admission, recognition and completion procedures, which the team found to be implemented reliably and in a transparent manner. Students described ample induction and admissions procedures. The team heard how a range of

processes and tools were used to collect, monitor and act on student achievement and progression. Graduates receive comprehensive transcripts and documentation on completion of their programme, with the chance to give feedback regarding their experiences at GMU. Therefore, the review team 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

5.1   GMU has established policies relating to Peer Assessment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement, Manpower Planning and Recruitment, Professional Requirements for Teaching Research Support, Promotion, and Professional Development of Faculty and Staff. These are supported by an appropriate implementation of the policies including a developmental Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme, a Faculty (staff) Handbook, and a Peer Assessment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee in each college. In addition, there is a regular course and faculty evaluation by students that feeds into the procedures.

5.2   The proportion of part-time teaching staff employed by UAE higher education institutions is restricted to less than 25% under CAA regulations. As is common in health and medical schools, many staff teaching clinical skills to students are active clinicians. In GMU, many of the clinical staff are employed in healthcare settings that are adjacent to and associated with the University but employed by another body. GMU has developed a faculty track system, approved by the CAA, whereby staff are appointed to one of three career tracks: clinical, research or academic.

5.3   GMU believe that their Employment and Professional Requirements for Teaching policies guide the recruitment of appropriately qualified staff. Details of the recruitment process of new faculty is described in the Manpower Planning and Recruitment policy. Following monitoring of staff workload and the potential need for expertise in a specified area, the Dean of a college may seek permission from the Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to appoint a new member of staff. Should this request be approved an international search is initiated using online recruitment websites. The CVs of applicants are screened by a College Recruitment Committee, comprised of the Dean, Associate Dean (Academic), Departmental Chairs and other staff relevant to the speciality sought. Shortlisted candidates undertake a two-stage interview - initially with the College Recruitment Committee and the second with the Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the Dean and others as necessary. All teaching appointments are underpinned by a formal contract, normally for a period of two years and renewable.

5.4   Part-time faculty members are hired to ensure the workload of full-time faculty is within the limits set by the CAA. The need for a part-time faculty member is raised by the department chair, the request verified by the college Dean and finally approved by the Vice-Chancellor Academic. They are restricted in the amount of teaching they undertake but must have the same qualifications as full-time staff.

5.5   Newly-appointed staff undertake an orientation process to highlight the university regulations, policies and their role, responsibilities and expectations. The whole appointment and induction process is documented in the Faculty Handbook.

5.6   GMU has five categories of academic staff - full-time, part-time, visiting, adjunct and emeritus; employed within four primary academic ranks - Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Lecturer. Lecturers and teaching assistants undertake some teaching duties, monitor attendance, and provide general academic support. Preceptors are responsible for monitoring students in clinical environments and provide 'valuable formative and summative feedback'.

5.7   Adjunct faculty are normally qualified health professionals whose primary employment is external to GMU and are appointed to supplement the full-time teaching. They are appointed in compliance with the guidelines provided in the 2019 Standards for Institutional Licensure and Programme Accreditation of the CAA. Each academic 'rank' has an associated job descriptor. As mentioned, academic staff are mapped into one of three employment tracks: the educator/researcher, who spend more than 60% of their time focused on education; the researcher/educator, who spend more than 60% of their time undertaking research; and the clinician/educator, who are health professionals spending more than 70% of their time providing healthcare services. The latter track focuses on the scholarship of application by pursuing scholarly activities in clinical care teaching and education. In each of these separate tracks the personal KPIs in the areas of teaching and learning; research, scholarship and creative activities; and service, are differentially weighted.

5.8   Faculty applying for promotion are judged against published criteria using a careful evaluation of the candidate's contributions to education, research and service to the college, university and the community. Applications are first reviewed at departmental level, followed by processes at college and university levels. The criteria used are appropriate to the track the applicant is following and are published in the Faculty Handbook.

5.9   Information relevant to academic staff is set out in the GMU Faculty Handbook, which includes information on roles, faculty development and performance appraisal, workload policy and promotion policy.

5.10   Since 2017-18, GMU has operated an annual Faculty Performance Review and Development System. The current Peer Assessment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement policy became active in October 2020 and aims to improve teaching by each member of academic staff having their teaching critiqued by two nominated observers twice in the first year of operation of the policy. Subsequently, the frequency will be based on the previous peer assessment report recommendations and on students' feedback in both faculty member evaluation(s) and course evaluation(s). The observers complete a standard form during the observation itself. A post-observation meeting then occurs within a week during which the observee and observers discuss the findings and suggestions for improvement may be made and documented. Following this, the observee completes a self-reflection which will be followed up in the next peer assessment cycle.

5.11   Each college is required to have a Peer Assessment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee whose aim is to create 'a structured process for mentorship and peer assessment of teaching to be used as a mechanism for supporting faculty development, enhancing teaching, and learning quality'. Student feedback on courses, including staff performance, is presented to the Course Curriculum meeting that is attended by student representatives and course coordinators.

5.12   The University organises internal educational workshops, recent examples include Blended Learning, Assessment and Evaluation, Inter-professional Education, and the use of new technologies. There are also college-specific workshops.

5.13   The University is conscious of the need to promote scholarly activity that produces new knowledge and informs teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The Research Support Policy underpins these desires and the ambition to improve the research standing of the University. There has been a steady increase in papers published in Scopus cited journals.

5.14   The University offers a 50% scholarship to staff who undertake the GMU Joint Master's in Health Professions Education (JMHPE) organised by the College of Medicine. This programme is run in collaboration with two international partners - one based in the UK

and the other in the USA. Staff who successfully complete the programme, which includes a research project in year two relevant to their work environment, are awarded a joint master's degree.

5.15   The University encourages and supports staff to attend and participate in conferences and workshops. In-service training and travel funding is available for faculty who are supported by qualified lecturers, teaching assistants and preceptors. Staff are entitled to paid leave for up to 10 days a year and the registration fee for one accredited conference per year is reimbursed. If the attendee is invited to participate, up to 50% of the airfare and hotel expenses may be paid (up to a maximum of United Arab Emirates dirham (AED) 2500). If the attendee is presenting an original paper at the conference, the University reimburses 100% of the air travel and hotel expenses (up to a maximum of AED 5000).

5.16   The standing of the University was recognised recently when GMU signed an agreement with the Dubai Health Authority (DHA). The Director General of the DHA is quoted as saying that the 'Gulf Medical University is one of the leading national medical institutions, which has established itself as an advanced centre for training future generations of medical students in various disciplines and is an important centre in the field of research, studies and development.'

5.17   A six-module 'Certificate of Competence in Health Professions Education' has recently started in collaboration with the Training and Development Centre of the UAE Ministry of Health and Prevention. The aim of this programme is to provide current and future clinical educators, and residency programme directors with the core competencies needed to be an effective teacher, trainer and leader in the field of Health Professions education.

5.18   GMU has produced an award-winning Virtual Patient Learning platform that is an application based on problem-based learning and social constructivism, and driven by an artificial intelligence system. It is hoped that this will invoke critical thinking, clinical reasoning, and communication skills among students by giving them authentic medical problems presented by a virtual patient.

5.19   The review team established through the examination of supporting evidence and online meetings, that faculty and staff feel well supported in professional development activities and that they are aware of opportunities to participate in conferences, research activities and other professional events. Faculty and staff generally expressed a positive attitude to the effectiveness and benefit of the annual appraisal system. In the last three years, the data provided shows that the overall student satisfaction with their course has steadily improved.

5.20   Overall, the review team concludes that GMU provides a structured and supportive environment that allows faculty and staff to undertake their responsibilities effectively and facilitates personal development. Scholarly activity is encouraged and supported to strengthen the link between clinical delivery, research and teaching. Additionally, there are fair and transparent recruitment processes in place. Consequently, the review team concludes that Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6   Learning resources and student support

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

Findings

6.1   GMU provides a variety of resources to assist and support students in their learning. The University has a number of specialist facilities for medical education, including lecture theatres, science laboratories, libraries, clinical skills, and simulation centres and training sites. Students are offered a comprehensive library orientation on enrolment. Budgeting for the provision of learning resources is overseen by the GMU Budgeting Committee, supervised by the Chancellor, College Coordinators, Deans of College and Heads of Department.

6.2   As well as physical learning resources and facilities, staff and students also have access to GMU's virtual learning environment (VLE) - MyGMU. This allows students to access their syllabus, e-learning, as well as lecture notes and learning materials. Student feedback on courses, at the middle and end of each year, is anonymous, and the VLE is used to notify students about opportunities for feedback.

6.3   Each student is provided with a full-time faculty adviser (academic tutor), who can provide advice regarding selecting electives, support for academic concerns, and monitoring academic progress. The Student Happiness Centre, aims to be a first-line of support for students in the case of academic and non-academic issues, financial support, coordination of the mentorship programmes, student counselling, and as a liaison between the student and other GMU departments. Students and staff describe easy access to student support services and the Student Happiness Centre, due to its close proximity both within the University, and ease of access to online support resources when working remotely. Staff took care to ensure that students were aware of the support services available to them at Orientation. Funding for student support services are supplied through the Student Affairs Services, who manage and support activities, including extracurricular activities and student clubs, accommodation and student hostels. An annual satisfaction survey monitors student feedback regarding these facilities.

6.4   Student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support. Flexible teaching has been put in place as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff confirmed the University's status as exempt from some COVID-19 restrictions, due to their provision of medical education, allowing for onsite attendance. A Distance Learning Committee now meets weekly to monitor and improve remote provision of learning and teaching. Regular feedback and information is shared with staff and students via the Melange student newsletter, through the University social media channels, and student surveys. Students informed the review team that although there had been some issues accessing IT remotely, students from a variety of courses had been able to continue to learn flexibly with little impact on their studies, with a mix of online, remote learning and in-person socially-distanced rotation experience. Support staff confirmed that although the COVID-19 pandemic had been a challenge, they had been able to swiftly adapt and prioritise online and e-resources over hard copies, to ensure all students had access to providing learning resources and support.

6.5   Support staff are qualified to undertake their role; the student counsellor has extensive experience in this position. Support staff described a wide range of training opportunities available to develop their competency and support skills, including quality

assurance training at a departmental level and Ministry of Education training, involving instruction in admissions software use and cohort analytics.

6.6   The University provides a broad range of extracurricular activities for students. The University has strong links with alumni and has recently founded the GMU Start-Up Lab for students and alumni to gain assistance, networking and legal support to turn their business ideas into a reality. Students also described very positively how their feedback had been used to develop improved student activities, and how their suggestions had been taken on board by the faculty and specific changes made. Similarly, in light of the pandemic, many student activities had easily made the transition to online extracurricular activities and social clubs.

6.7   The review team concludes that the University provides a range of appropriate learning resources and student support services, underpinned by a suitable level of funding. The University ensures that extracurricular activities are made available, and that these are relevant and accessible. Therefore, Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7 Information management

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

Findings

7.1   GMU uses a range of mechanisms to gather, collate and report information from faculty, students and other stakeholders. There is an established institutional effectiveness policy and framework to support continuous quality improvement. In January 2020, GMU updated its organisational structure and introduced the position of Vice-Chancellor for Quality and Global Engagement (VCQ&GE) to lead and coordinate the quality enhancement efforts taking place across the University.

7.2   As described in paragraph 1.9, the University Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness (QA&IE) Committee is chaired by the VCQ&GE with the membership being the chairs of the Quality Assurance and Programme Effectiveness (QA&PE) Committee of each college together with the Director of the QA&IE Unit. The role of the QA&IE Committee is defined, including reviewing the instruments for each survey in terms of their clarity and validity. Each college has a QA&PE Committee composed of faculty members representing different departments and student representatives whose responsibilities include the supervision and implementation of a culture of quality through the college organisation, structure, functions and operations.

7.3   The University QA&IE Unit is headed by a Director who personally reports directly to the VCQ&GE. The purpose of the QA&IE unit is to provide evidence of institutional effectiveness to university and college management and the University through a systematic evaluation of all academic programmes and courses, and the academic, student and administrative support services offered by GMU. The results of the evaluations are used in planning, budgeting, establishing priorities, and the continuous enhancement of the academic provision and services.

7.4   The QA&IE Unit designs and, after approval, administers surveys using a commercial evaluation/survey software platform. The surveys include student satisfaction with faculty; student satisfaction with courses; student satisfaction with university services; a survey of new entrants (freshmen); a graduate exit survey; faculty satisfaction with university services; satisfaction with university services from the university administration; a hostel accommodation survey; a stakeholder evaluation of the QA&IE Unit itself; and of the mentorship scheme in operation.

7.5   The QA&PE Committee in each college coordinates the faculty, staff and student awareness of the electronic surveys before they are launched. The software platform used is able to handle the whole process, including automatically sending prescheduled emails to enhance the response rate.

7.6   The QA&IE Unit also extracts data from the Student Management System (used to report twice a year to the UAE Ministry of Education); the Learning Management system; an online database used to collect and share management data (including staff workload, class sizes and KPIs); a platform used to manage population of standardised forms (for example, the programme effectiveness report); and the examination management system. Using this data, the QA&IE Unit populates and supports an online platform that is organised around the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation standards.

7.7   This recently developed online platform contains KPIs based on an IPOO model of Input, Process, Output and Outcome indicators for the University, colleges and individual programmes (see also paragraphs 1.5 and 9.2). The platform has sections on programmes, staffing, students, research, community engagement, and repositories for policies, procedures and documents like survey reports and committee minutes. The data is accessible to anyone with a university email login and is used across the University to support tracking and enhancement of all activities.

7.8   The QA&IE Unit provides reports for the University Leadership Team, containing data and material to support evidence-based decision-making at the university level. The QA&IE Unit also provides data and detailed analyses to the colleges and administrative units for their consideration and to develop action plans.

7.9   The QA&IE Unit reviews the analyses and action plans developed at the university, college and programme level to ensure their validity and to ensure that SMART actions are documented. These are followed up in future iterations. They also report on trends for continuous improvements based on feedback.

7.10   Examples of KPIs, the 2019-20 Fact Book, student enrolment and progression data, and graduate employment data were made available to the review team. The review team also examined a range of reports which set out action plans in response to data analysis and feedback from faculty and students.

7.11   Students confirmed the utility of the GMU VLE - MyGMU - and the media used by GMU to communicate with them, and to facilitate access to key information about their courses and programmes. In the 2019 student satisfaction survey, the satisfaction of students with their course varied between 87% and 100%, depending on their programme, and their satisfaction with faculty varied between 91% and 100%.

7.12   The GMU Chancellor holds regular formal and informal meetings with faculty, staff and students, both to communicate key institutional developments and listen to feedback from the various constituencies. Students were unanimous in their view that GMU took effective steps to engage them and to listen and respond to their feedback, both verbal and written. Opportunities are made to gather student feedback at every stage of their learning journey, including end-of-course and end-of-programme surveys, evaluations of orientation programmes, of learning resources and of the complete range of support and campus-based services (further examples can be found in paragraph 9.3). Among examples of GMU responding to feedback given, students mentioned provision of talks by external practitioners regarding career opportunities, and issues relating to the provision of car parking. The review team considers that the multiple opportunities for students to provide feedback has positively impacted on their overall learning experience and is **good practice**. Notwithstanding the multiple opportunities for feedback, the observation of the review team, supported by student comment, is that GMU relies heavily on the use of online surveys to gather student feedback. To limit survey fatigue and to gain richer unconstrained feedback, the review team **recommends** that GMU employs a broader range of methods in the acquisition of feedback from students.

7.13   The review team confirmed, through meetings with faculty and staff, as well as by examining documentary evidence (including sample course monitoring audit trails and performance dashboards), that GMU generates and analyses a range of data that effectively informs strategic and operational decision-making. The review team consider that the Quality Assurance and Institutional Effectiveness portal, which provides staff at all levels easy access to data and information critical to monitoring many aspects that impact on student progression, achievement and evaluation of programme effectiveness, is **good practice**.

However, the review team would suggest that GMU consider the feasibility and achievability of some of the KPIs.

7.14   In conclusion, GMU uses a range of information and quantitative data sets to inform evidence-based decision-making, which also feeds into the various internal and external quality assurance monitoring and reporting processes. Consequently, the review team 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

8.1   Information about the University, its activities, programmes and selection criteria are available on the GMU website. Design and development of the university website is guided by the Website Policy with input from the University Communications Department and the Website Monitoring Committee (WMC). The minimum criteria for the website includes publicly-available information including admissions requirements, programmes offered (with local accreditation status, if applicable), programme learning outcomes, learning opportunities available to students (such as student services and facilities), course costs, and information about the faculty teaching staff delivering the course. Social media is also used to share information regarding admissions, events, research news, student and faculty achievements.

8.2   Drafts of publicly available information are prepared in line with Institutional and National CAA policies, reviewed by the Dean and the Head of the unit. This is forwarded to the Website Monitoring Committee (WMC) for approval. Following authorisation, the draft is submitted to the University Communications Department, and proofread by the WMC before final consent is granted for posting to the GMU website.

8.3   Information for the general public and prospective students on the university website, as well as relevant presented documentation, was found to be clear and easily accessible. Examination of the GMU website also reveals clearly tabulated information about course pass rates from the GMU 2020-21 Fact Book, the qualifications awarded, and the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used (as a study plan), and information about career opportunities.

8.4   For staff, the University provides a Faculty Handbook. This outlines faculty categories, professional ethics, academic honesty, the faculty track system, and principles of academic freedom. Staff confirmed that they had been directed to the Faculty Handbook, which was available to them online. Students are similarly provided with a Student Handbook, which gives a comprehensive overview of student life. A rotation handbook is also provided while on clinical placement and a student-dedicated newsletter is produced, which details student news and activities. The student newsletter is organised and managed by the Student Affairs Department. Students confirmed that the information available to students before starting their programme, and at enrolment, was found to be satisfactory, particularly for those who were unable to attend the university before enrolment.

8.5   In defining the 'diversity' of a student population, the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG, 2015) considers this to encompass students of differing attendance (due to attending university on a part-time basis), differences in age (mature students), differences in country of origin (international students), or those who are employed at the same time as completing their studies.

8.6   The review team considered the GMU website, the documentation provided to the review team, and discussed the provision of flexible learning for diverse students with staff and current students. Although the university website has information for people of determination, in compliance with the UAE National Policy for Empowering People with Disabilities, this information was not always easily accessible within publicly-available information sources. For example, no reference to the support services available to people

of determination can be found within the Student Handbook, the Staff Handbook, or programme catalogues. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University clarifies the support available to diverse students and people of determination and ensures that this information is easily accessible.

8.7   Information provided by the University to the general public, prospective students, current students and academic staff is unbiased, clear and easily available. To ensure accuracy, clear procedures and committees oversee the checking and publication of publicly-available information, and this information is reviewed regularly. 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

9.1   As mentioned in several sections above (paragraphs 2.1, 2.4, 2.5), all programmes offered by GMU are accredited by the CAA and are aligned to appropriate levels of the UAE National Qualifications Framework. GMU ensures that regular programme monitoring and review occurs through several quality assurance mechanisms. These are aligned to the different levels of the Kirkpatrick Model[4] (evaluate reaction-learning-behaviour-results) which constitutes the conceptual underpinning for the GMU Quality Framework.

9.2   The Kirkpatrick Model is used by GMU to measure the effectiveness of the educational programmes. KPIs are assessed by evidence-based instruments classified according to the IPOO Model, mentioned in paragraph 1.5. GMU KPIs include new enrolments, progression rates, student/faculty ratio, student satisfaction scores, student retention, gender ratio, and student scholarships, among others. The indicator trends are critically analysed to evaluate achievement of continuous improvement over time. The University has set internal benchmarks for each of its indicators based on previous performance and the internal analysis of GMU resources.

9.3   Student feedback is collected on courses, instructors and support services. The GMU SED indicates that the Exit Survey is an important feedback mechanism that evaluates the level of graduate satisfaction with the achievement of programme learning outcomes. Every two years, GMU conducts an alumni and employer survey. Recently, the alumni survey was replaced by the Graduate Destination Survey which is undertaken by the UAE Ministry of Education GDS Office, in conjunction with the GMU QA&IE Unit. A Freshman Survey is conducted to assess the awareness, aptitude and attitude of newly admitted students into the programme (see also paragraph 7.12).

9.4   The outcomes of these evaluations are used to enhance academic programmes and support services. Student performance and achievement of learning outcomes are evaluated by faculty during instruction, clinical rotations and internships. A mid-semester course evaluation is conducted to identify any areas that need to be addressed immediately.

9.5   As previously mentioned, each college has a QA&PE Committee, which has responsibility for implementing and monitoring quality assurance systems for all aspects of college operations. The chair of each QA&PE Committee is also a member of the University QA&IE Committee. This cross-representation helps GMU to integrate all aspects of its quality assurance framework.

9.6   Feedback on courses and on clinical rotations is reviewed at the end of each session and relates to the achievement of the learning outcomes by students. The student evaluation also elicits feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of the instructional delivery, the appropriateness of the topics covered and suggestions for improvement. Feedback from students is analysed by the QA&IE Unit and sent to the Programme Director and copied to the Dean. The Programme Director forwards the feedback analysis to the Course Coordinator who prepares a SWOT analysis concerning the feedback, for discussion

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[4] Kirkpatrick, D L (1994). Evaluating training programs: the four levels. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler

with the College Curriculum Committee. An action plan is developed to address enhancements in partnership with the course coordinators and student representatives and recorded in the Course File. The summary of the feedback analysis and actions taken are shared with students. As well as closing the feedback loop with students, GMU sees this action as incentivising students to continue to provide meaningful feedback. The range of opportunities for students to provide feedback is noted as good practice in paragraph 7.12.

9.7   GMU conducts a review of each of its academic programmes on an annual basis. Up to 2017-18, each college compiled one annual report for all its programmes. To apply a greater degree of focus to each, GMU decided that each programme should have its own report. To enable more effective tracking of planned actions, GMU introduced a table at the back of each report detailing the actions to be taken and identified who was responsible for implementation.

9.8   Like other CAA licensed institutions, GMU is subject to periodic inspections by the CAA-MoE during the reaccreditation of all programmes. The SED indicates that this external quality assurance process by the CAA, has acted as a catalyst to drive improvements within GMU. As stated in Standard 1.2 above, the CAA appoints an External Review Team (ERT), which includes international experts in cognate fields.

9.9   In addition to the CAA appointed periodic ERT, a number of GMU programmes are accredited by international professional bodies such as the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education and the Institute of Biomedical Sciences. The GMU Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) programme learning outcomes are aligned to the World Federation of Medical Education.

9.10   GMU had an external advisory board for each college until 2019-20. Since then, each GMU programme has its own advisory board. These boards, among other things, provide advice on curriculum content; professional skill sets; changes to the labour market; alignment of the profession's contribution to meet societal needs and expectations; and to provide advice and input to the college within their field of expertise. Input from employers and graduates is also sought as part of continuous review and monitoring of programmes.

9.11   GMU's partnerships with international universities, mentioned in Standard 1.2 above are also referenced as being central to benchmarking quality assurance practice and educational provision. The University has recently developed a Strategic Partnerships Policy aimed at defining the purpose of partnerships in terms of alignment with the institutional mission and strategic goals and adopting best practices. The policy includes international partnerships. The University also advised the review team that it will establish an international committee to oversee these relationships.

9.12   External examiners are key suppliers of critical external input, as they are drawn from other universities in the region. Recommendations of external examiners are reviewed and used for benchmarking through consideration at regular meetings of the advisory board and other relevant committees. The benchmarking components may include student assessment results, output of research publications and employability.

9.13   Already mentioned above, as a step towards effective, accurate and efficient performance information management, the QA&IE Unit has established this year an online platform. This IRU portal is based on the CAA standards to support tracking and enhance all quality aspects across the University. The platform sections enable each Department Chair/ Programme Director to find the values for 48 KPIs for the last academic year classified according to the IPOO model. The portal includes capacity for the Department Chair/ Programme Director to enter and monitor the action plans for improvement that are made based on programme KPIs, inputs from the programme advisory board, student feedback for

courses and graduate exit surveys. The portal also has information on all the community engagement activities conducted at university/college level.

9.14   The review team found that GMU undertakes regular monitoring, review and revision of programmes to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. The University's internal processes interface effectively with the CAA external programme approval and renewal processes.

9.15   GMU has developed strong international relationships and, as mentioned above, cites these as being central to benchmarking quality assurance practice and educational provision. GMU advised the team that its international partnerships start from the 'bottom up' when institutions find some sort of alignment in interest, often starting with individual contacts. At a later stage, as the partnership develops, the University gradually takes ownership of those partnerships.

9.16   As noted in previous paragraphs (paragraphs 1.5, 3.8, 3.21, 9.2), GMU takes many opportunities to benchmark its activities against similar local, regional and international provision. However, having examined the many benchmarks used and the way in which they are chosen, the review team was unable to determine a robust rationale for benchmark selection and setting. In general, the team found that the University's approach to benchmarking, including with international partners, was not sufficiently codified and **recommends** that the University develops a strategic approach to benchmarking that defines what is to be benchmarked, level of attainment and the use to be made of external input, with particular reference to international partnerships.

9.17   During the site visit, the team confirmed that external examiners are used effectively for a variety of purposes, in relation to both assessment and external benchmarking and scrutiny (see paragraph 3.21 and 9.12). They are used for moderation of final high stakes (summative) examinations/assessments in every programme, as well as providing external comment on the programme as a whole.

9.18   Both employers of graduates and graduates themselves confirmed that they have had constructive input to programme monitoring and review, which has resulted in tangible improvements.

9.19   Through analysis of documents, reports and committee papers, and discussions at the virtual site visit, the team is satisfied that GMU uses performance and outcomes data effectively in its development and review processes. Of particular note is the QA&IE portal, which provides easy access for staff at all levels to data and information critical to monitoring many aspects that impact on student progression, achievement and evaluation of programme effectiveness, which the team have identified as good practice (see paragraph 7.13).

9.20   In conclusion, the team found that GMU has a range of mechanisms to monitor and periodically review programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews lead to continuous improvement of the programmes. The team, therefore, concluded that Standard 1.9: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes is **met.**

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

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

Findings

10.1   In addition to GMU's programmes being subject to external accreditation by the CAA, the University also goes through an Institutional Licensure (IL) process, which applies to the whole institution and all its activities. In order to be licensed, the institution must meet 11 standards and their criteria cover all major institutional activities. Only after being granted licensure may an institution apply for accreditation for an academic programme.

10.2   Licensure signifies that the institution has a mission appropriate to higher education and possesses the governance structures, regulations, policies and procedures, academic programmes, physical infrastructure, resources, quality assurance, faculty and other personnel to accomplish its mission.

10.3   The CAA directs institutional review to determine if the institution meets the academic and educational requirements specified in the Standards for Institutional Licensure (SIL). The CAA appoints an External Review Team (ERT) who will visit the institution and examine the institution's self-assessment report. If the institution operates across multiple sites or campuses, several or all of the locations will normally be visited. An assigned Commissioner will be a member of the ERT and will work closely with the institution to ensure that the site visit runs smoothly.

10.4   The ERT produces a report concerning compliance with the Standards. The report may also include constructive narrative and requirements for improvement or 'suggestions' which are advisory. After receiving the report, the institution must provide the Commission with a written response. Once an institutional review has confirmed that the stipulations of the SIL have been successfully met, it will receive the MoE's licence and be admitted to the National Register. Recognition of programmes through accreditation can only occur in licensed institutions. Under the CAA's risk-based approach to review, institutions may be reviewed on a schedule of three, five or seven-year cycles.

10.5   Different programmes at GMU are subject to the cyclical evaluation frameworks of various international accrediting bodies such as the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) and the Institute of Biomedical Sciences (IBMS). The BBMS programme outcomes are benchmarked to the Quality Code in Biomedical Sciences, UK. A self-study was submitted to the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), UK which was followed by an ERT visit to GMU to accredit the programme in April 2019. Following a successful meeting of the Standards, the programme received the IBMS UK accreditation in September 2019.

10.6   As mentioned above, a number of higher education institutions have partnered with GMU in academic initiatives, such as reviewing programme self-study reports, providing valuable feedback and, in some cases, contributing to the development, delivery and assessment components of the curriculum.

10.7   The CAA IL process provides robust external cyclical quality assurance. As discussed above under Standard 1.2, the review team saw evidence that the University interacts with and responds in a positive and proactive way to the CAA's processes. This applies equally to IL. The team saw evidence through reports and committee papers and discussions with staff, that IL has acted as a catalyst for improvement and offered the

institution new perspectives. This has also involved two-way dialogue with GMU feeding back to the CAA on aspects of the framework and process.

10.8   GMU's policies, procedure and practices see quality assurance as a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. There is evidence that the University ensures that the progress made since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one. The team, therefore, concluded 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.

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

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

Enhancement
See **quality enhancement**.

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

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

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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