



International Quality Review Mid-Cycle Review of Kuwait International Law School

May 2021

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About this mid-cycle review

This is a report of a Mid-Cycle Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) of the Kuwait International Law School (KILAW). The mid-cycle review is desk-based and conducted by a team of two, as follows:

- Mr Piers Wall (QAA Reviewer)
- Mr Alan Weale (QAA Officer).

The full International Quality Review (IQR) in November 2017, resulted in a [published report](#). The QAA review team concluded that KILAW met all the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).¹ The team identified eight features of good practice and made four recommendations.

This mid-cycle review evaluates progress against the key actions since the IQR and considers any significant changes that may impact on the ESG standards.

Outcome of the mid-cycle review

1 From the evidence provided the review team concludes that the Kuwait International Law School (KILAW) is making **satisfactory progress** since the November 2017 International Quality Review and that the period of accreditation be continued to 31 December 2022.

Changes since the last IQR review visit

2 Strategically, the School is making good progress. Three stages are elucidated in the strategy: the Excellence Stage which has been worked on and achieved over the last 10 years; the Model stage - started at the beginning of the academic year 2020-21; and thirdly, the Comprehensive Academic Reference Stage which will begin in 2030-31.

3 The current Model Stage is one where 'it aspires to present pioneering models in various fields, including but not limited to the best teaching methods, the best faculty members, the best published academic research, the best academic practices and the best team in competitions' (KILAW, *Report of the Mid-Cycle Review*, p34, paragraph 3).

4 KILAW has stated its intention to pursue full university status in Kuwait. In support of this objective, it has revised its organisational structure to strengthen overall governance and further clarify the relationships that exist between the School's departmental structure and the senior management. Due process has been followed in introducing the review structure with approval by the School Council at the meeting held on 4 December 2019 and by the Board of Trustees at the meeting held on 8 December 2019.

5 The Kuwait Private Universities Council (PUC) regulations required the Board of Trustees to be reassigned every four years and, in fulfilment of these regulations, a new Board of Trustees was assigned for a period of four years as from November 2018. The Board of Trustees has also approved the restructuring of its committees to now include: an Executive Committee of the Board (permanently located in Kuwait); a Financial Committee; and an Academic Committee.

6 Based on the recommendations of the PUC, the positions of School President and School Dean have been separated; they were previously held by one person. In addition, a

¹www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg

new position of Vice-President for Administrative and Financial Affairs was established in November 2021; the duties of the Vice-Dean for Research and the Executive Director of the Research Centre have been merged.

7 The role of Registrar has been removed from the organisational structure and a new position of Dean of Admissions and Registration has been established to cover the Registrar's responsibilities related to these functions, as well as incorporating responsibility for the Academic Advising Office and Alumni Office. These changes were introduced in 2018.

8 Responsibility for the library has been transferred from the Associate Dean for Research (following cancellation of the position) to the Dean of Academic Affairs - a decision approved in September 2018.

9 Evidence supporting the due process underpinning these decisions has been provided. There has been substantial change to the management structure of KILAW in the period since the IQR in November 2017, but the changes are rational and can be seen to support the general direction being taken by the School towards the establishment of university status. Lines of responsibility have been clarified and are more transparent, and there is clearer separation of academic and business decision-making.

10 The School is now engaged in finalising procedures required by the PUC to allow the School to become a university. In support of its application for university status, KILAW cites a number of developments. These include: the proposed launch of a new School of Governance and Systems in 2022; a new Paralegal Diploma programme from 2021-22; a new Master of Law and Financial Transactions; and plans to develop a PhD programme.

11 The School has a new building and facilities ready to receive students and faculty. The new building has a fully-equipped lecture theatre; two gymnasias; two swimming pools; classrooms; offices for the Kuwait Centre for Legal Studies and Research, meeting rooms, faculty and administrative offices, and a cafeteria.

12 Library facilities have been enhanced through the development of electronic and online facilities, and access for those not on campus has been improved.

13 Steps have been taken to improve the management information available to management administration and faculty more widely. This includes the implementation of interactive analytical dashboards connected to the Student Information System. The dashboards are accessible online through any computer or smart device. KILAW is also using a system of intelligent Sentiment Analysis to carry out analysis of student feedback. It uses Artificial Intelligence and Natural Language Processing techniques to analyse the textual comments submitted by students in their feedback and evaluation.

14 New collaborative ventures have been pursued since the IQR visit in 2017. A Community Service Centre at KILAW has been established. The Centre will offer training programmes to develop legal concepts in various fields, especially for legal professionals, individuals and workers in the legal field in government and private agencies. Two agreements with the British Council in Kuwait have been signed. These establish KILAW as a registration centre for exams including being an IELTS exam venue.

15 KILAW is a member of the Private University Union (PUU) in Kuwait, which consist of private institutes, colleges and universities. The Union's purpose is to enhance academic relations between the Union and other similar organisations in the Arab and other international countries. It conducts research and provides advice and consultation. KILAW's president is a board member of the PUU.

16 International research collaboration is being pursued and, to this end, KILAW is working with King's College London Law Faculty on an area of mutual interest - climate change. Three memoranda of understanding have been signed - two renewals and a new agreement with the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. Academic cooperation in place at the time of the IQR visit in 2017 has been continued, including with: King's College University; Manchester University School of Law; the London School of Economics; George Washington University Law School; Milan University School of Law; and Cambridge University.

17 Quality assurance policies have been developed, including the implementation of a policy for distance learning and its operational regulations. A major review and updating of the Quality Assurance Handbook is to be undertaken by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) with a view to automating procedures and minimising paperwork. All administrative procedures are to be encompassed by this review.

Findings from the mid-cycle review analysis

18 Following the IQR in 2017, KILAW developed an action plan with key items considered at relevant committees. The mid-cycle review submission prepared by KILAW outlines the progress made against the good practice and recommendations. The mid-cycle review is a desk-based process and, as such, the team considered various documents submitted by KILAW alongside their mid-cycle review report. The review team has been able to conclude from this analysis that KILAW is continuing its good practice and clear progress has been made in response to the four recommendations, with all having been addressed with effective oversight.

19 The active engagement of representatives of the KILAW Associated Universities and its significant contribution to the development of the institution was identified as good practice. This engagement has continued with areas of cooperation including academic consultation, visiting faculty exchange, student exchange, evaluation visits, research and the potential development of a joint degree.

20 The strong emphasis on professional practice within and outside the curriculum and its enhancement of the employability of KILAW graduates was identified as good practice. KILAW has continued to review and expand its development of legal courses taught in the English language to enable students to compete in the labour market. Students are required to take practical courses which further enhance employability skills and additional opportunities to develop these further are available through the Student Development and Competitions department. Links with state institutions and involving legal professionals has helped develop an appropriate balance between theory and practice in the curriculum. The role of the Alumni office has also made a significant contribution through its activities, workshops and surveys.

21 The third area identified as good practice was the extent and nature of the support for study in English, which facilitates the uptake of opportunities for bilingual study. Good practice continues to take place in this area. The English Language Department at KILAW was awarded accreditation in April 2019 by the Commission on English Language Programme Accreditation (CEA). This process also included a review of the recruitment policy for the department to meet the CEA requirements. The English language test was also reviewed and a listening component added to enhance the quality of the test. A review of the course goals in preparing students for studying in English has several recommendations for the department to consider when reviewing the curriculum. The use of study groups has increased, leading to an improvement in the performance and standards of students in the English language.

22 The significant support provided by Academic Advisors to assist students in planning their programme of study and monitoring their progress was the fourth area of good practice identified. The academic advising system has been further developed through increased interactions regarding student performance between the Academic Guidance and Orientation Office, students and Academic Advisors. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of academic warnings to students.

23 The fifth area of good practice identified was the diversity of faculty membership and the contribution this makes to the development of the curriculum which significantly enhances the student learning experience. The process for extending diversity has been extended to include diversity by legal schools as well as by nationality. Recruitment from a range of different legal schools and geographical areas has continued to enhance the student learning experience.

24 The significant range of support for continuous professional development of faculty was identified as the sixth area of good practice. This support continues to be significant and is evidenced in a number of ways. There is funding for participation at national and international conferences as well as for training programmes (organised by KILAW and external training bodies) to enhance performance and skills. Model lectures are used to encourage innovation in teaching and learning, and staff are encouraged to attend the KILAW international conference. Research is published in KILAW's Academic Periodic Journal and funding is also available for publications. The School is currently looking at introducing academic awards to further encourage professional development. The promotion system for Teaching Assistants which links levels of qualification, grades and roles was introduced to encourage development of academic skills and qualifications.

25 The seventh area of good practice identified was the high level of engagement with, and support for, participation in external legal competitions and the significant contribution this made to graduate career development. The Student Development and Contribution office continues to play a key role in this area, organising a range of activities - with the support of faculty and external lecturers - which contribute to students' development and skills. In addition, funding is available for students and staff to encourage participation in internal and external competitions and there is clear evidence of these opportunities being taken up.

26 The final area of good practice identified was the role of teaching assistants in providing additional support for student learning and its impact on their academic progression. This continues to be an area of good practice. The role of the teaching assistants has been further developed to support students in their development as it now includes coaching and contributions to training students who participate in local and international competitions. Increased communication through the teaching assistant system has resulted in increased awareness of the study groups among students and improved attendance from students with low performance issues. Teaching assistants are able to participate in KILAW's academic activities, offer training courses and pursue funded further studies.

27 The first recommendation of the IQR related to the development of the quality assurance policy to articulate more clearly how the various quality assurance processes integrate and relate to the committee structure. The policy has been reviewed and updated and shows how the processes relate to each other and to the organisational structure. The policy was reviewed by a range of stakeholders within KILAW and changes agreed. The policy was discussed and approved by the appropriate committees. Quality assurance policies for distance learning programmes have also been developed.

28 The second recommendation related to the development of generic criterion for each gradation of the assessment grading system. This recommendation has been acted on with the development of a criterion references assessment system which defines in words each grade and should aid understanding. The criterion was reviewed and approved at the relevant committees.

29 The third recommendation related to assessment criteria and the provision of specific criteria aligned to learning outcomes to accompany coursework assessment briefs. KILAW has acted on this recommendation by reviewing learning outcomes to ensure they are measurable and aligned with assessment criteria. Consideration has been given to the nature of the course when reviewing these and developing criteria. Students are made aware of these through the course programme information they receive.

30 The final recommendation related to how programme monitoring and review operates at KILAW. As a result of this recommendation KILAW has developed two manuals which detail the process for introducing, approving and periodically reviewing programmes and courses. These serve as guides for all academic departments. The manuals were developed by a committee set up for this purpose and were reviewed and approved by the KILAW's Council. The manuals outline the process for annual monitoring of programmes and how this feeds into the development of an action plan. Actions may focus on improving or updating existing courses or may lead to the development of new courses due to changes in the labour market.

Progress in working with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and other external bodies since the review

31 KILAW is engaged with a number of external bodies which carry out reviews and accreditation. The Private Universities Council (PUC) in Kuwait carried out a full academic accreditation review and assessment in December 2018. Several recommendations were made and an action plan developed to respond to these. In May 2019, KILAW was granted academic and institution accreditation for four years.

32 The KILAW Associate Universities carried out periodic review and site visits in December 2019. This coincided with the annual visit and review of the School Academic Advisory Board. Two reports were produced, and recognition was given to the achievements of KILAW. Both reports included recommendations which were considered by KILAW's management and acted on.

33 The English Language Department at KILAW was awarded accreditation from the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA) following an initial visit which gave accreditation for one year initially in 2018. Following a response to the recommendations, accreditation was granted for a further four years in 2020.

Conclusion of Accreditation Panel

The QAA Accreditation Panel considered this report at the meeting held on 28 June 2021 and determined that the period of accreditation for Kuwait International Law School can continue to 31 December 2022.

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