About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Emirates Aviation University. The review took place from 25 to 28 October 2021 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
Dr Dave Dowland
Dr Harry Williams (student reviewer).

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).

In International Quality

International Quality

Conditions

2020 Re-Licensure, urged the development of 'a revised Strategic Plan…based on addressing EAU'

1.12 Following submission of further evidence by EAU in May 2022 (See Addendum, page 30) the review team concluded that the actions already taken by EAU and those proposed for future action are appropriate in design to ensure that strategic plans and policy development includes staff, students, and other external stakeholders. The effectiveness of these proposals will take some time to emerge as they are operationalised, but the University has now put in place a more robust framework and implementation will

Standard 1.2 Design and approval of programmes

3.13 While reviewing the sample of assignment briefs submitted by the University, the review team noted that some cover sheets stated that late submission would lead to a deduction of marks; however, the number of marks that would be deducted was not clear. When the review team met with students, they found a confusing picture with students in different schools reporting different consequences should they submit work late. Raising this with the University, the review team was told by academic staff that the institutional policy towards the late submission of work should be included in the relevant programme specification, but the specifications submitted to the review team did not include this information. Other potential sources of information, including the Student Handbook, also fail to mention the institutional policy on the late submission of work. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University ensures the policy for late submission is published and accessible to all students.

3.14 The University maintains a course file for each course. The course file is updated each time it is offered, which for most courses is on an annual basis. The course file should contain an evaluation by the instructor on the efficacy of teaching methodologies as well as an evaluation of the appropriateness of assessment instruments in relation to the learning outcomes. However, an analysis of the course files provided by the University did not reflect this. The course files were incomplete, each containing a different level of information, with little evidence of evaluation by instructors on the efficacy of teaching methodologies or the appropriateness of assessment instruments in relation to the desired learning outcomes. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University ensure the mechanisms in place for reviewing the appropriateness of assessment practices are applied consistently.

3.15 Students receive developmental feedback on all assessed work. Students reported that while they were largely happy with feedback when it was returned from tutors, each tutor appeared to set their own deadlines for the return of feedback. Exploring this during the review visit, the University confirmed that it does not have an institutional policy for the provision of feedback, whether stf32(y)-32( )]TJET42.25 revpro3.15

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Dean. Information on submitting a grade appeal is contained within the Student Handbook. During the review visit, the University confirmed that grade appeals are managed largely by individual schools and that there is no University-level monitoring and analysis of grade appeals. As a result, the review team **recommends** that the University establish arrangements for the monitoring and analysis of grade appeals.

3.19 The University aims to develop its students into successful graduates in the aviation sector in the UAE and further afield. While it appears that students are satisfied and student outcomes are positive, the recommendations in this Standard cover a range of issues including student complaints, grade appeals, and feedback on assessed work. Together, these present a significant risk to the student academic experience and therefore the review team concludes that Standard 1.3, student-centred learning, teaching, and assessment is **not met**.

3.20 Following submission of further evidence by EAU in May 2022 (See Addendum, page 30), the review team acknowledges that this is a difficult standard for the University to address because it is about a culture as much as it is about including 'student-centred learning' in the appropriate policy documents. The review team noted that the evidence supplied in response to the condition is focused on communicating the current Teaching and Learning Policy. The next phase should now focus more explicitly on reflecting the qualities associated with student-centred teaching, learning, and assessment. Notwithstanding this, the University has clearly taken steps to ensure staff throughout the University are cognisant of the Teaching and Learning Policy and to that extent there is notable improvement. More time will be needed before effectiveness of implementation can be fully evaluated. Given that there is a stronger policy base that can now form the bedrock for embedding student-centred learning, the review team has concluded the condition is **met** at a threshold level, but further work will be necessary to ensure full University-wide understanding.

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', eg, student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1 The University provides information relating to its approach to higher education in several ways, including via its website, social media, printed marketing materials, and outreach events. The Undergraduate and Postgraduate University Catalogues provide more comprehensive information relating to course structure, content, and programme-specific entry requirements.

4.2 The Admission and Registration Department is responsible for coordinating student admissions, registration, and for maintaining student records. The EAU Admissions Policy and EAU Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, both of which are contained within the EAU Policies and Procedures Manual, outline the University's approach to the recruitment and admission of students. At the end of their programmes, graduates are issued with graduation certificates and a transcript of their academic studies.

4.3 Applications themselves are submitted online through the EAU website. After review, the Admission and Registration Department will issue a conditional letter of acceptance if the applicant's details meet the entry requirements of the programme. An applicant is only considered fully enrolled on a programme once their tuition fees are paid in full.

4.4 All new students are provided with a copy of the Student Handbook, which is also available on the University's VLE, and this includes information about the academic programmes, admissions and registration regulations, as well as information on the various services offered by the University. There is also an induction programme for new students which covers not only the University's facilities but also operational matters, including policies, procedures, and regulations.

4.5 There are policies in place to ensure that students with prior learning or technical skills can receive academic credit exemptions through the University's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy. There are also procedures in place to enable the monitoring of student progression, these are also outlined in the EAU Policies and Procedures Manual.

4.6 The EAU Admissions Policy, which is found in the EAU Policies and Procedures Manual, is the central document outlining the University's approach to recruitment and admission. The policy is reviewed annually and, where any changes are necessary, these are first approved by the relevant School Council before being sent to the Vice-Chancellor and the University Council for final approval.

4.7 While the EAU Admissions Policy does outline several key pieces of information, not least general entry requirements, the review team found that the policy did not outline a mechanism by which applicants could appeal admissions decisions. During the review visit, the review team confirmed with the University that while a mechanism was not currently captured in the EAU Admissions Policy, there was one circumstance in which an applicant could informally appeal an admissions decision. This was if a missing entry requirement had now been addressed, for example, resitting a qualification that would allow the applicant to meet the criteria. Nevertheless, given that currently no formal procedure exists to appeal an admissions decision, the review team **recommends** that the University establish and publicise a process by which admissions decisions can be appealed.

5.8 The link between education and research is currently being strengthened at EAU, following recent changes to the CAA Standards for Licensure. The Faculty Manual lists the responsibilities of academic staff, which are heavily biased towards teaching and student support. However, research activity is a criterion for staff teaching at postgraduate level, or for promotion to assistant professor or above.

5.9 In alignment with a recent revision to the CAA Standards for Institutional Licensure and Programme Accreditation to promote research activity, the EAU Faculty Development Plan includes a Research Plan that aims to develop the EAU Research Centre. The plan includes encouraging staff to engage in research projects and to publish their research in conferences and refereed journals. New research facilities will be developed, and it is

aim to expand, grow, and become the leading provider of aviation-related higher education in the region.

6.9 In addition to the new campus, the University continues to invest in infrastructure to support the delivery of the curriculum. This includes, for example, the purchase of two state-of-the-art wind tunnels, one of which is used for teaching, while the other is used for research purposes. There is operational information in the Student Handbook on accessing the University's teaching and learning resources. During the review visit, students and student representatives were positive about their access to facilities and especially impressed with the provision of technical equipment and technical workspaces. The review team considers the University's continued investment in, and use of, high quality technical learning resources, which enhance the student learning experience, as **good practice**.

6.10 The team explored the University's VLE and found that it was accessible and could therefore support students in their studies. However, the review team also found that different programmes had different levels of information available to students. The review team felt that this established a risk that students on different programmes may have significantly different experiences. This contributed to several recommendations in other standards, see Standard 1.3 and Standard 1.4.

6.11 The Student Life and Activities Unit is the key point of contact for students needing support, although the team found that this normally involves just signposting students to either external health providers or the Emirates Group Counselling Service rather than providing counselling themselves. Students may also approach their Academic Advisor for help. Students were generally positive about the support available to them, although during the review visit some students reported not knowing who their Academic Advisor was or having ever met them, despite being several months into their programmes of study.

6.12 While the University conducts regular surveys of the student body to gauge satisfaction with various services, the review team found limited other evidence of oversight and monitoring of the student support function. Therefore, the review team **recommends** that the University strengthen the arrangements in place for the monitoring and oversight of student support services.

6.13 There are strong links between the University and its student body. This allows students and student representatives to communicate frankly on matters concerning them. During the review visit, the review team heard several examples of students and student representatives approaching members of the senior leadership team with problems, which were promptly passed to the appropriate member of staff. The University encourages its alumni to keep in touch and to engage with events and activities, including workshops and career fairs.

6.14 The University benefits greatly from its relationship with the Emirates Group, which provides the core budget for the University. The team concluded that while the mechanism for planning and allocating resources lay within a system of ad hoc committees, the recent move to the new campus and the continued investment in high-quality teaching and learning facilities demonstrated that there were very good levels of funding available for teaching and learning resources.

6.15 The review team found that learning and teaching activities were well funded, that the facilities provided were excellent and readily accessible and, notwithstanding the recommendation around strengthening the arrangements for monitoring and oversight, that student support was provided. The review team concluded, therefore, that Standard 1.6, learning resources and student support is **met**.

leading to progression and awards. Internal and external audits are also used to make various checks on the security of data.

7.8 The University collects, analyses and uses relevant information for the effective management of its programmes and other activities, therefore Standard 1.7, information management is **met.**

Standard 1.8 Public information

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

Findings

8.1 The EAU website includes a large amount of information about the institution and the learning opportunities it provides. In addition to the website, information about the

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

9.8 The example programme assessment reports mostly follow the process prescribed by the Quality Assurance Manual and start with the programme objectives and outcomes. They include the findings from a student exit survey, and alumni survey, together with corrective actions and recommendations for improvements.

9.9 The biennial programme review process includes a benchmarking exercise that includes evaluation of the content of the programme comparison to similar programmes offered by other institutions. This helps to ensure that the programme contents are up to date and reflect current developments in the field and the changing needs of society.

9.10 Each review also considers the programme objectives and learning objectives, evaluation of the assessment tools, the learning environment, student opinion and a set of student performance data that includes student enrolment, performance and academic misconduct cases, programme objectives and learning outcomes, and survey data from staff and students.

9.11 Example programme assessment reports include information from employer surveys, and minutes of meetings of the industrial advisory panel. Every programme has its own industrial panel.

9.12 Students contribute to the programme assessment review process through course and lecturer evaluation surveys, twice-yearly student workshops, Staff-Student Liaison Committees, and an exit survey. There is a Graduate Council, representing postgraduate students, which meets twice per year.

9.13 While the team did not meet any students that had been involved in the process of reviewing programmes, the student representatives confirmed that their role included communicating student feedback on their programmes to the staff. Postgraduate students reported that information received through the student surveys was used to enhance the provision.

notable improvement. More time will be needed before effectiveness of implementation can be fully evaluated. Given that there is a stronger policy base that can now form the bedrock for embedding student-centred learning, the review team has concluded that the condition is **met** at a threshold level, but further work will be necessary to ensure full university-wide understanding.

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.

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,

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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