



Executive Summary
Renewal of Licensure
New York University-Abu Dhabi

1 June 2020

The Commission for Academic Accreditation (hereafter CAA) appointed an External Review Team (ERT) to review the *Self-Study* submitted for Renewal of Institutional Licensure of New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). Due to the prevailing global pandemic at the time of the review, the ERT conducted its evaluation remotely by videoconference. NYUAD also provided written answers to inquiries posed by the members of the ERT and supplemented the *Self-Study* with substantial additional documentation, upon request from the ERT. The exit interview was held on 1 June 2020.

NYUAD is part of a global network of New York University (NYU), with academic centres located, in addition to Abu Dhabi, in Accra, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Florence, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Paris, Prague, Shanghai, Sydney, Tel Aviv, and Washington, DC, plus the original campus in New York City in the United States. The NYU Board of Trustees created NYUAD by resolution on 17 May 2007, based on a framework agreement with Tamkeen, NYU's government partner in Abu Dhabi. NYUAD received Initial Licensure from the CAA in January 2010 and Initial Accreditation of 22 programs in 2012. The first cohort of 157 students matriculated in Fall 2010, and 133 students graduated in 2014, representing an initial four-year graduation rate of 85%. The CAA renewed NYUAD's License in 2015. Undergraduate enrolment has increased to 1,450 in Fall 2019, including 227 Emirati national students. NYUAD is a highly diverse institution with students from 110 countries.

A distinguishing feature of the NYU global network is that each academic centre is intended to be a stand-alone institution with academic programs that are distinctly suited to its local environment, rather than a branch campus offering study programs of the parent university in New York. Faculty and student interchange among the centres is strongly encouraged. NYUAD offers 24 undergraduate majors based in four academic Divisions: Arts and Humanities; Social Science; Science; and Engineering. The University is independently accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE). NYUAD is located on a custom-built campus on Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi.

New York University Abu Dhabi has a distinctive and ambitious vision. Having completed its first decade of licensed operations in the United Arab Emirates it is clearly fulfilling its aspiration to provide a high-quality educational experience to the full-time student body and, at the same time, serving the wider community in the Emirate. The University has established a broad range of study programs at undergraduate level. The next stage of development

includes the further enhancement of research activity and expansion of postgraduate programs, thus drawing on the experience of NYU as a premier research institution.

This review has been based on the ERT evaluation of NYUAD's *Self-Study* submitted for Renewal of Licensure, and supporting documentation provided in advance of a series of online interviews with the leadership team and groups of faculty and administrative staff. A number of positive attributes of NYUAD have been identified including the following particular strengths:

- Strong and committed leadership with continuity of service to the development project.
- Effective communications with, and support from, NYU as a major international university.
- Comprehensive support from the Abu Dhabi Government.
- Impressive purpose-built campus on Sadyaat Island with facilities and equipment providing high quality educational, residential and recreational experiences.
- A robust research infrastructure with some external funding and initiatives underway to secure additional external grants and collaborative projects.
- Recognition by many professional accreditation bodies bringing added standing to the University and its programs.
- Opportunities for students and faculty to complement their experience in Abu Dhabi with studies in other locations.

The ERT has also identified the following weaknesses. Greater attention needs to be given to fulfilling the particular requirements of the *Standards*. These relatively new *Standards* have accompanying Stipulations that carry the same weight as the *Standards*, and these in turn may refer to separate Annexes with additional detail. The guidance for covering all relevant facets of the *Standards* and providing suitable supporting evidence is given in the Procedural Manual for Renewal of Institutional Licensure (*PMRIL*). Examples of instances where the *Self-Study* is deficient in this way are the content of the website and Bulletin (catalogue), Policies and Procedures Manual and the Quality Assurance Manual. Gaps in addressing the *Standards* and the *PMRIL* are clustered as principal concerns under the following thematic headings:

- Planning and Research: At the institutional level the ERT is aware that there is full attention given to future planning and review of achievements. This high-level planning evidently trickles down to divisions, programs, support departments, and administrative units. The question remains for the ERT as to the status of approval and implementation of the overarching NYUAD Strategic Plan. This needs to be clarified. The ERT acknowledges that as a consequence of an agreement with the Abu Dhabi Executive Authority, budgets are not available for release to the Commission. This restricted access does prevent the ERT from evaluating the linkage between strategic planning and available budget thus demonstrating compliance with Standard 9.

With the elevated attention to research in the 2019 *Standards* and Stipulations, driven by the national agenda to promote research and development activity, there is a requirement for a detailed research plan and strategy. The Commission expects this consolidated document to define the goals for research, the expectations of faculty, support mechanisms to include funding opportunities, and all relevant policies and procedures. These elements of the research strategy and plan require further documenting for dissemination to faculty.

- Health and Safety: The *Self-Study* is lacking in supporting evidence to demonstrate that the policies and procedures relating to health, safety, and security, are appropriately disseminated, adhered to, and regularly evaluated. Similarly, documentation is required related to the implementation of evacuation drills.
- Technology: In relation to IT services and systems, the university clearly has a sophisticated infrastructure suited to effective internal operations and for the global network context of NYUAD. However, there are needs for evaluation of the effectiveness of systems and some instances where policies are required and/or documented guidance. For example, there are policy gaps related to integrity and confidentiality, specifically for each of its academic systems, administrative systems, and institutional networks; and in regard to short-term and long-range plans for the replacement and upgrading of technology resources.

The ERT is confident that the above issues of concern in these areas can be readily resolved.

The ERT makes its recommendations in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid NYUAD in its desired objective to be granted Renewal of Licensure.