



Executive Summary

Renewal of Licensure

Rashid Bin Saeed Al Maktoum Naval College

August 16-27, 2020

An External Review Team (ERT) was appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) to conduct a distance review visit at the Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum Naval College (NC) from 16 August 2020 to 27 August 2020 to evaluate an Application for Renewal of Institutional Re-Licensure (hereafter the *Self-Study*).

NC was established in 1999 on Saadiyat Island, moving to its present location in Al Taweelah, Abu Dhabi in 2008. The immediate objective of the NC is to function as the Naval Academy of the UAE Armed Forces. Naval students are able to supplement their training with Diploma and Bachelor level higher education. Initially, the programs were offered in collaboration with Bahria University in Pakistan, with the qualifications awarded by that institution. In 2005 the NC took responsibility for its own higher education. Following this period, ownership of the higher education programs changed once again; a contract was signed between the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the UAE Armed Forces and the Higher Colleges of Technology in the UAE (HCT). Since 2010 the degree has been owned and awarded by HCT in association with the NC, with a mixture of faculty and staff involvement: some employed by HCT through its subsidiary (though permanently based at the NC), some uniformed naval officers, and some employed through GHQ.

At the time of this review, therefore, the NC does not, itself, operate as a higher education institution, since it is offering no higher education qualification of its own. The Diploma in Naval Science, and the Bachelor in Naval Science were most recently accredited in January 2018, through the HCT, as is appropriate given their ownership. In principle, then, the NC does not require a higher education license, but is seeking to renew this license in any event.

The current situation is unusual. At present the NC is not offering higher education programs of its own and, therefore, does not require a license as a higher education provider. However, it is clear that the Ministry of Education and the NC wish the NC to retain its higher education license in order that it may in the future host higher education programs (whether new or existing). This is a rational basis for an application, and the one on which this review proceeded. As a consequence, the ERT approached this review with two major objectives in mind: first, to ensure that current institutional arrangements (involving the NC, the HCT, and the Naval Forces Institute (NFI)) are proceeding appropriately and in line with the *Standards*; second, to

ensure that – if and when the NC decides to offer its own higher education programs – it is in a position to do so effectively.

In a number of key areas, the ERT is relatively happy with NC's current arrangements and has confidence that, if it were to offer its own higher education programs, these arrangements would continue in line with the expectations of the *Standards*. Specifically, these cover the areas of research, community engagement, and learning and physical resources.

Unfortunately, the *Self-Study* and annexures provided by the NC did not meet expectations in some important areas. The *Standards* cover all four forms of licensing and accreditation processes that are undertaken by the CAA. Each of the four processes is governed by procedural manuals that are set out in four separate procedural manuals. For Renewal of Institutional Licensure there is a procedural manual setting out the expectations of an application – in terms of areas to address and evidence that should be provided. The *Self-Study* and its annexes made by the NC neither addressed these requirements nor provided the evidence necessary in some areas.

- The final year of the Bachelor in Naval Science takes place at the NFI. However, no information regarding the NFI was included in the *Self-Study*. As a result, the ERT was not able to draw reliable conclusions in areas covering policy and quality assurance.
- While the NC has policies and procedures, many policies that actually apply to students, faculty, and to processes and functions associated with the higher education, are actually those of the HCT (and to a lesser but important extent, the NFI). As a result, the ERT was not able to conclude that the necessary policy frameworks are complete and, indeed, consistent.
- While the NC has a quality assurance function, a great deal of that function is actually owned and operated by the HCT. In particular, the entire quality framework for program effectiveness belongs to HCT. No details of this were provided, nor was any evidence of its operation provided. While this process of Renewal of Institutional Licensure does not examine the details of the academic programs, the *PMRIL* does require specific evidence of active quality assurance processes and evidence that this is used in planning for improvement. While the ERT learnt during discussions during the visit that quality assurance information flows from the activities that take place at the NFI, no formal discussion or evidence was provided. In particular, no coordination policy or manual was provided.
- Those teaching students on the academic programs are variously employed by the HCT, by the NC, and by the NFI. The ERT received details of those in the first two categories and no details at all regarding those at the NFI. Even the evidence provided demonstrates that faculty qualifications do not meet the *Standards*. This matter was also raised in the ERT report for the Initial Accreditation of the programs in January 2018.
- At present, with the academic programs awarded by the HCT, there is no need for the NC to employ all the faculty required or for it to have all policies and frameworks needed to cover the delivery of higher education. However, as a licensed higher

education provider (its status following a successful conclusion to the current process), the NC would need to demonstrate that it has its own competences in these areas. Should the NC propose entirely new academic programs, these would be subject to an application for Initial Program Accreditation; at which point those competencies would be checked. If, in contrast, the NC were to take back full ownership of the current academic programs, it would be necessary for the NC to make an Application for Substantive Change to the CAA. Such an application would require the NC to address those critical areas that are currently provided by the HCT. If such an eventuality were to arise, the ERT strongly recommends that the NC discuss what is required with the CAA in advance of a formal application.

The ERT makes its *Requirements* and *Suggestions* in a spirit of constructive engagement, with the aim of ensuring that the *Standards* are met, and to aid NC to receive Renewal of Institutional Licensure. The ERT requirements and suggestions can, and should, be viewed as “Opportunities for Improvement” as NC progresses towards excellence in education, research, and service.