



## Executive Summary

### Renewal of Institutional Licensure Khalifa Bin Zayed Air College Al Ain

12-15 September 2022

An External Review Team (ERT) appointed by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) visited Khalifa Bin Zayed Air College (hereafter KBZAC), from 12 to 15 September 2022 to evaluate the Self-Study for Renewal of Institutional Licensure (hereafter the *Self-Study*) submitted by KBZAC. The exit meeting was held on 15 September 2022.

Air College was established in 1982 on Al Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, moving to its present location in Al Ain in 1995, and renamed as Khalifa Bin Zayed Air College in 1996. KBZAC delivers Air Force pilots and Air Defense training mandated by the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the UAE Armed Forces through the Air Headquarters (AHQ) and in joint venture program delivered in partnership with the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT) and the UAE Armed Force under the aegis of the Military and Security Division of HCT.

KBZAC reports a total enrolment of 617 cadets (Group 52: 209, Group 53: 213, Group 54: 195) during the Fall 2022 semester. The total number of full-time faculty members in KBZAC during Fall 2022 is 147 (including 32 Faculty from HCT). The KBZAC faculty members are recruited from a wide range of cultural and educational backgrounds drawn from more than 15 nationalities. In Fall 2022, the full-time faculty to cadet ratio is 1:13 for first- and second-year cadets, and 1:2 for third year cadets.

The nature of the relationship between GHQ, KBZAC, and HCT is such that many functions and policies are owned and delivered by HCT. The adequacy of these functions and policies are subject to HCT's own licensure activities with the CAA and were not reviewed separately during this review and discussed in detail in this report. Their suitability with regard to KBZAC's needs are, of course, relevant to KBZAC's licensure and are therefore, and to that extent, assessed as part of this review.

The ERT is pleased to note that the KBZAC continues to offer its cadets opportunities to obtain a higher education qualification through its association with the HCT.

As KBZAC does not offer higher education programs of its own, KBZAC does not require a license as a higher education provider. However, both the Ministry of Education and KBZAC wish KBZAC to maintain its higher education license so that KBZAC retains the right to host higher education programs (whether new or existing). This is a rational basis for an application for licensure, and the one on which this review proceeded.



The ERT would like to commend KBZAC on its higher education operations. In particular, the ERT would like to note:

- **The commitment and enthusiasm** shown by its current cadets, its graduates, the teaching faculty, both those employed through HCT and those directly employed by KBZAC; the KBZAC leadership; and the HCT program leadership.
- **The way in which the responsibilities of HCT and KBZAC are managed effectively.** The arrangement is potentially difficult, not simply because two different higher education providers are involved, but because of necessity, KBZAC is subject to strict military security in many areas; and
- **KBZAC's world-class facilities** that support the education provided to its cadets.

In a number of key areas, the ERT is happy with KBZAC'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:

- Health and Safety
  - Learning and Physical Resources
  - Financial Management
  - Legal Compliance and Public Disclosure
- and
- Community Engagement.

Areas where the ERT has identified issues in need to resolution are:

- **Mission, Vision, and Objectives:** While the *Vision* is well drafted, it is not present in all institutional documents. This applies to the *Mission* as well. In this latter case, there appears to be a conflict between what was presented in the *Self-Study* and what is included in the appendices. These are fairly minor matters that will be easy to address. The ERT also has some concerns over the KBZAC objectives in terms of measurability and achievement.
- **Risk Management:** The ERT notes KBZAC's approach to Risk Management. This is largely sound. However, the ERT also noted that some risks are not well drafted and a clear approach to ensuring the effectiveness of risk management is missing.
- **Quality Assurance:** This is a difficult area for KBZAC to manage, together with HCT, in order to ensure responsibilities are clear and all aspects of quality assurance are covered. At the KBZAC level, the quality manual is not well drafted; it contains much irrelevant information and does not provide a clear description of how those aspects of program effectiveness that fall to KBZAC are assured (that is, the final year of the program) and how those administrative functions that are not covered by HCT policies are, similarly, assured.
- **Research:** While the ERT is pleased to see that faculty are productive, and that their research can be supported post-publication (or post-acceptance, in the case of conference articles), it notes the lack of a research budget and a broader range of research support that



would, for example, provide funding proactively prior to the research and its subsequent publication.

- **Website:** The ERT reviewed the KBZAC website and found out-of-date information present and miniscule information about the programs. The latter is to some extent understandable as the programs are owned by HCT. The ERT advises to link directly to the HCT website in this regard and provide additional information on the KBZAC website. Finally, many faculty and staff, and interested members of the public, are not speakers of Arabic. An English, version of the website would therefore be useful.
- **Preparedness:** At present, as a consequence of the relationship between KBZAC and HCT, a great deal of the quality assurance is undertaken by HCT, particularly those aspects concerning program effectiveness. Should KBZAC decide to develop programs under its own ownership, it should note that it currently does not have the well-founded quality assurance function that is required by the *Standards*. Any such submission for program accreditation will need to include steps that KBZAC has or will make in order to establish such a comprehensive function.

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 KBZAC in its desired objective to attain renewal of institutional licensure.