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FINAL REPORT

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY

PSYCHOLOGY (BACHELOR)

June 2025



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DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME

▪ “PSYCHOLOGY (BACHELOR)

OFFERED BY UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY, AL AIN, UAE

Based on the report of the expert panel, the comments by the university and the discussions of the AQAS Standing Commission in its 25th meeting on 19 May 2025, the AQAS Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programme “**Psychology**” (**Bachelor**) offered by **United Arab Emirates University, UAE** is accredited according to the AQAS Criteria for Programme Accreditation (Bachelor/Master).

The accreditation is conditional.

The study programme essentially complies with the requirements defined by the criteria and thus the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. The required adjustments can be implemented within a time period of twelve months.

2. The conditions have to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the conditions has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **31 May 2026**. The confirmation of the conditions might include a physical site visit within the time period of twelve months.
3. The accreditation is given for the period of **six years** and is valid until **31 May 2031**, provided that the conditions listed below are fully met. Otherwise, the accreditation may be withdrawn.

Conditions:

1. The practical implementation of the procedures for quality assurance needs to be consistent and the quality assurance cycles need to be closed (i.e. complete files need to be made available).
2. A higher number of teaching staff is needed to improve the student-staff ratio and to fill the experience gaps in the staff portfolio. The required progress in hiring needs to be proved and documented.

The following **recommendations** are given for further improvement of the programme:

1. The link and exchange with the labour market should be strengthened to ensure that BA graduates gain an understanding of the market and that requirements of the labour market are more directly considered in the continuous development of the programme. Information on the job opportunities for BA graduates should be transparently made available to students.
2. The curricular focus of the programme should be sharpened and aligned with research profiles of involved staff, and it should be consequently visibly promoted across all relevant channels.
3. The faculty should include students as relevant stakeholders in the quality assurance structures and bodies of the faculty.
4. The workload and teaching load of staff should be more transparently specified.

5. Public information should be made widely available and also targeted at external stakeholders (e.g., practitioners, international experts) and a broader audience interested in the study programme.

With regard to the reasons for this decision the Standing Commission refers to the attached experts' report.

EXPERTS' REPORT**ON THE STUDY PROGRAMMES****▪ “PSYCHOLOGY (BACHELOR)****OFFERED BY UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY, AL AIN, UAE**

Visit to the university: 25/26.02.2025

Panel of experts:

Prof. Dr. Harald Lachnit	University of Marburg, Center for Mind, Brain and Behaviour, former Vice-President, Germany
Prof. Dr. Ibrahim Al-Harthy	Sultan Qaboos University, Psychology Department, former head of Quality Assurance, Muscat, Oman
Prof. Dr. Jan Dettmers	Founder and Owner of EVAO GmbH, Königstein, Germany (representative of the labour market)
George Jogho	PhD Student of Analytical Psychology, Catholic University of Freiburg, Germany (student expert)

Coordinator:

Ronny Heintze	AQAS, Cologne, Germany
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I. Preamble

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation supported by nearly 90 universities, universities of applied sciences, and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been recognised by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is, therefore, a notified body for the accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes in Germany.

AQAS is a full member of ENQA and also listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) which confirms that our procedures comply with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), on which all Bologna countries agreed as a basis for internal and external quality assurance.

AQAS is an institution founded by and working for higher education institutions and academic associations. The agency is devoted to quality assurance and quality development of academic studies and higher education institutions' teaching. In line with AQAS' mission statement, the official bodies in Germany and Europe (GAC and EQAR) approved that the activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither limited to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor a particular type of higher education institution.

II. Accreditation procedure

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor programme "Psychology" offered by United Arab Emirates University.

1. Criteria

The programme is assessed against a set of criteria for accreditation developed by AQAS: the AQAS Criteria for Programme Accreditation (Bachelor/Master). The criteria are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) 2015. To facilitate the review each criterion features a set of indicators that can be used to demonstrate the fulfilment of the criteria. However, if single indicators are not fulfilled this does not automatically mean that a criterion is not met. The indicators need to be discussed in the context of each programme since not all indicators can necessarily be applied to every programme.

2. Approach and methodology

Initialisation

The university mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in December 2021. The university produced a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In February 2023, the institution handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation on the programmes and an appendix as well as, in case of a reaccreditation, statistical data on the programmes. The appendix included e.g.:

- an overview of statistical data of the student body (e.g. number of applications, beginners, students, graduates, student dropouts),
- the CVs of the teaching staff/supervisors,
- information on student services,
- core information on the main library,
- as well as academic regulations.

AQAS checked the SER regarding completeness, comprehensibility, and transparency. The accreditation procedure was officially initialised by a decision of the AQAS Standing Commission on 27. February 2023. Following the initialization the curriculum of the programme was substantially changed; hence the final version of the SER was handed in in December 2024.

Nomination of the expert panel

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently, representatives from the respective discipline, the labour market, and students are involved. Furthermore, AQAS follows the principles for the selection of experts defined by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA). The Standing Commission nominated the aforementioned expert panel in February 2025. AQAS informed the university about the members of the expert panel and the university did not raise any concerns against the composition of the panel.

Preparation of the site visit

Prior to the site visit, the experts reviewed the SER and submitted a short preliminary statement including open questions and potential needs for additional information. AQAS forwarded these preliminary statements to the university and to all panel members in order to increase transparency in the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

Site visit

After a review of the SER, a site visit to the university took place on 25/26 February 2025. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the management of the higher education institution, the programme management, of teaching and of other staff, as well as students and graduates, in separate discussion rounds and consulted additional documentation as well as student work. The visit concluded with the presentation of the preliminary findings of the group of experts to the university's representatives.

Reporting

After the site visit had taken place, the expert group drafted the following report, assessing the fulfilment of the AQAS Criteria. The report included a recommendation to the AQAS Standing Commission. The report was sent to the university for comments.

Decision

The report, together with the comments of the university, forms the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission to take a decision regarding the accreditation of the programme. Based on these two documents, the AQAS Standing Commission took its decision on the accreditation on 19 May 2025. AQAS forwarded the decision to the university. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In June 2025, AQAS published the report, the result of the accreditation as well as the names of the panel members.

III. General information on the university

United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) is a public research university located in Al Ain, United Arab Emirates. It is the oldest university in the United Arab Emirates and was established in 1976 following independence from Britain by the founding father of the UAE, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Students currently come from all seven Emirates and more than 64 other countries. The United Arab Emirates University also uses ranking to compare with other universities in the region and beyond. UAEU has an established strategic plan which is revised and published every four years. Following the SER central to its core strategy is to prepare students to be distinguished in their areas of specialization, to become effective future leaders and productive members of society.

The UAEU has undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes across nine colleges listed below:

- College of Business and Economics
- College of Education
- College of Engineering
- College of Food and Agriculture
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences
- College of Information Technology
- College of Law
- College of Medicine and Health Sciences
- College of Science

With more than 3,500 students and 141 faculty members from 29 different countries, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS), which runs the programme under review, is the largest of the nine colleges in UAEU. Established in 1977 as one of the four original colleges in UAEU, the CHSS explains to have an identity, informed by a rich academic tradition, a firm commitment to heritage and innovation, and a dedication to serve the community and the nation. In the Fall of 2019, the CHSS implemented a major restructuring of its departments, intended to facilitate programme innovation and opportunities for increased interdisciplinary research. This was part of larger suite of changes involving the reorganization of departments, academic programmes, and curricula. The motivation underpinning these changes was to make the CHSS more competitive (both nationally and internationally), to improve functionality and effectiveness, and increase the accreditation potential of various programmes within the College. As of Fall 2019, the CHSS comprises eight departments listed below:

- Arabic Language and Literature
- Cognitive Sciences
- Geography and Urban Sustainability
- Government and Society
- Languages and Literature
- Media and Creative Industries
- Social Wellbeing
- Tourism and Heritage Studies

All eight CHSS Departments are actively engaged in developing new academic programmes and revising existing programmes to ensure alignment with emerging 21st century needs and employment trends. In addition, in Fall of 2022, the University announced its intention to remove all minor programmes offered across the university. As such, each department within CHSS has been instructed to revise all current major programmes including psychology and to increase major requirements. The review happens at a time of change and will be include future plans while building on the experiences of the existing programme.

The CHSS at UAEU hosts the Department of Cognitive Sciences which provides the Undergraduate psychology programme. The Department of Cognitive Sciences exists to promote the inter-disciplinary study of the mind and is based around the traditional core subjects of psychology, linguistics and philosophy. The Psychology programme at UAEU was first established in 1977 as an independent Department in the College of Education. The Department of Psychology was subsequently transferred to the College of Humanities and Social Sciences in 1995-96, in response to an increasing need for professional psychological services. The Department of Psychology quickly developed in size and popularity. As the University upgraded its strategic goals to achieve greater quality in education and services, the language of instruction changed from Arabic to English in 2008. Subsequently, the Department of Psychology was renamed the Department of Psychology and Counselling. In 2018, the Psychology, Philosophy, and Linguistics programmes merged to create the Department of Cognitive Sciences.

IV. Assessment of the study programme

1. Quality of the curriculum

The intended learning outcomes of the programme are defined and available in published form. They reflect both academic and labour-market requirements and are up-to-date with relation to the relevant field. The design of the programme supports achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

The academic level of graduates corresponds to the requirements of the appropriate level of the European Qualifications Framework.

The curriculum's design is readily available and transparently formulated.

[ESG 1.2]

Description

The SER outlines **four key goals** for students taking the programme:

- (1) to develop the required skills to foster effective scientific enquiry in the field of psychology and an understanding of the scientific foundation of psychology,
- (2) to develop a comprehensive evidence-based framework in understanding human behaviour and cognition across the broad areas of psychology,
- (3) to develop a solid foundation in a range of key skills for psychological research and
- (4) to become aware of the range of applications of psychology across various professions associated with psychology.

The programme has defined **seven intended programme learning outcomes** reflecting the latest published APA standards (2023):

- **PLO1.** Develop a working knowledge of psychology's content domains reflecting key concepts, theoretical perspectives, empirical findings and overarching themes in psychology.
- **PLO2.** Implement skeptical inquiry, critical thinking and scientific reasoning to effectively interpret psychological phenomena.
- **PLO3.** Apply basic research methods in psychology, including research design, data analysis, and effective interpretation in a sociocultural context.
- **PLO4.** Identify and apply relevant ethical psychological standards in research, applied practice, and academic contexts.
- **PLO5.** Demonstrate psychological literacy and effective oral, writing and presentation skills in psychology.

- **PLO6.** Display effective judgment in professional interactions underpinned by effective self-reflection, collaboration and project-management skills.
- **PLO7.** Understand and apply psychological principles to understanding clinical, social, and organizational issues.

The PLOs are aligned with the UAEU Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). The ILOs define the core competencies that graduates will need to be successful in their chosen discipline areas, to assume future leadership roles, and to contribute to a national research effort:

- **ILO1:** Disciplinary Competency – Demonstrate knowledge and skills in a particular discipline and apply these ethically in real-life contexts
- **ILO2:** Research – Apply research skills in their academic work
- **ILO3:** Information Literacy – Locate, evaluate, and effectively use information derived from a variety of sources.
- **ILO4:** Quantitative Reasoning – Analyse quantitative data and draw reasonable conclusions
- **ILO5:** Critical Thinking – Evaluate issues logically, from multiple perspectives, and develop reasoned and creative solutions
- **ILO6:** Communication – Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, to diverse audiences

The curriculum of the bachelor's programme in Psychology is designed to allow students to complete all courses in the programme in eight semesters (four academic years), covering a total of 120 credit hours in the UAE national system. Specifically, the curriculum comprises the following components: seven general education requirements; 19 core psychology courses; six elective psychology courses; four free electives; two College requirements; and two major supporting courses.

Students participate in a semester-long internship in their final semester of study by enrolling in either an internship (PSYC452) or research project (PSYC454). Students are encouraged to complete all other coursework prior to enrolling in field-based practicums given the hours per day they are expected to be onsite.

Students must complete three research-related courses including a course on the foundations of psychological scientific inquiry (PSYC200), basic research methods (PSYC201) and intermediate research methods (PSYC310). Student learning about research culminates in the completion of a research project (PSYC454) or an internship (PSYC452), which allows students to work closely with individual faculty members on selected research projects. These four courses are said to provide students with a basic knowledge of the science of psychology, experience in designing research, collecting and analysing data, and reporting findings in both written and oral form.

Experts' evaluation

From the experts' point of view the programme has a rich and broad curriculum covering different areas of psychology. The programme offers a total of 75 credit hours in the Psychology major, with 57 CH for major core courses. The PLOs have been revised and benchmarked and the panel understands that the benchmarking activity was the rationale for the selection of courses. Furthermore, the course descriptions and CLOs reflect the desired qualifications and are well aligned with the PLOs. The curriculum convincingly aligns course titles with the PLOs, and the CLOs and PLOs are presented in the course syllabus.

After examining the CLOs, it became clear to the panel of experts that the PLOs reflect both academic and labour market requirements. For example, PSYC 315 covers motivation, stress, coping strategies in the workplace. However, the panel found that at this time there is no proof of direct input by the labour market in the programme/course design. In the continuous development of the programme a clear, direct tool (e.g., a focus group) should be implemented to capture the requirements of the labour market (**Finding 1**).

The panel of experts also understood from the site visit that the programme has met the requirements of the Commission for Academic Accreditation and is aligned with the Bachelor level of the QF-Emirates. These are mandatory requirements set by the UAE. To this end, the programme has established quality assurance tools to maintain this achievement. These include the review of the curriculum at college level and the annual review. Both quality assurance tools ensure that the programme activities (e.g., teaching, assessment) are aligned with the achievement of the PLOs. This alignment can also be confirmed for the achievement of the Bachelor level of the European Qualifications framework.

The students' progression rate was also discussed during the site visit, and the experts learned during the interviews that students' retention rate is high. In this context, the programme has established plenty of services to help students overcome difficulties, including a counselling unit, an undergraduate studies office, and academic advisors. In addition, the fact that the courses are structured in a targeted manner has proved to be a success. The programme has set prerequisites to ensure a logical sequence both vertically and horizontally. This is well reflected in Table 8 of the self-evaluation report. The curriculum explains prerequisites, course descriptions, CLOs, readings, course outlines (weeks, topics, teaching, and assessment), evaluation and grading, CLOs and PLOs mapping, policy, and academic integrity. The course plan gives detailed curricular elements to be covered in each week and also reflects workload expectations. For example, the PSYC 452 offers students an internship in which they can apply what they have learned. In this course, students demonstrate their knowledge and skills. It is a 400-level course that is mapped with PLOs 4-7. The PLOs 4-7 focus on application, demonstration, and presentation. This example is a good indication that the mapping practices are well established. However, the SWOT report has identified a prior misalignment among PLOs, CLOs, and assessment in the LOAMS. The panel understood that in the past months the programme structures underwent intense polishing and updating, addressing misalignments and strengthening a coordinated and student-centred learner experience. The panel encourages the department to further advance this course as also student feedback on already visible impact was largely positive.

The programme curriculum as presented in the programme handbook is divided into several components. These components are general education courses (21 CH), CHSS requirements (6 CH), major core courses (57 CH), major electives (18 CH), internship or research project (6 CH) and free electives (12 CH). The programme thus covers subject-specific, interdisciplinary knowledge, research, and general skills. However, it is observed that in terms of applied fields, the programme has a strong focus on clinical psychology (and counselling and school psychology), and that the research methods and expertise of the staff have a strong emphasis on experimental and cognitive psychology. Consequently, the programme should reflect on whether this focus is also the intended profile of the BA programme and highlight this more explicitly in its external communication and recruitment strategy (**Finding 2**). Other areas of application (e.g., health psychology) could also enrich the profile, but in general an explicit qualification profile should be given greater consideration in a future revision of the course structure and content.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

2. Procedures for quality assurance

The programme is subject to the higher education institution's policy and associated procedures for quality assurance, including procedures for the design, approval, monitoring, and revision of the programmes.

A quality-oriented culture, focusing on continuous quality enhancement, is in place. This includes regular feedback mechanisms involving both internal and external stakeholders.

The strategy, policies, and procedures have a formal status and are made available in published form to all those concerned. They also include roles for students and other stakeholders.

Data is collected from relevant sources and stakeholders, analysed, and used for the effective management and continuous enhancement of the programme.

[ESG 1.1, 1.7 & 1.9]

Description

The SER describes that the University Standard Periodic Program Review process is applied to the Psychology programme. The key elements of the periodic review include: (1) a self-study report which addresses programme well-being and the learning outcomes assessment, (2) involvement of an external review team, (3) site visit by external evaluators, (4) a final report and recommendations from the review team, and (5) a programme improvement plan prepared by the department and approved and enforced by the CHSS College council.

Furthermore, as part of the continuous enhancement, this programme has an ongoing plan for the assessment of the programme learning outcomes (PLOs) and course learning outcomes (CLOs). It consists of a three-year assessment cycle during which every one of the programmes learning outcomes is assessed. Every year a selected set of programmes learning outcomes are assessed against a target achievement level i.e., $\geq 70\%$ achievement by 75% of students). Attainment of the above mentioned seven PLOs for the psychology programme are available for the year 2018-2019 in the SER. PLO attainment ranges from 75% to 85%.

Every course offered in the programme is assessed via student surveys every year using an established university wide template. This template allows for student course evaluations to be compared against performance levels at the departmental, college and university levels. This template provides a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. Student satisfaction across 20 domains is assessed including achievement of course outcomes, the development of critical thinking, and satisfaction with the type and number of assessments utilized. Students' satisfaction data for three academic years starting with 2018-2021 are presented below across four domains: (a) faculty, (b) curriculum, (c) resources and (d) overall satisfaction. As the SER describes, scores across all four domains for the old curriculum version of the programme are lower than the College average and student satisfaction with the curriculum was lowest for satisfaction with the curriculum.

Course coordination is the responsibility of the Chair of the Department of Cognitive Sciences. The Chair maintains quality and consistency of instruction across courses. She schedules regular meetings with faculty and provides resources to support teaching and learning. The Chair oversees the administration of Psychology programme including course scheduling and examinations.

Experts' evaluation

The procedures for quality assurance for the Psychology programme are well defined and the experts appreciate the transparent discussion of these procedures and possible improvements. While the procedures are well defined, the practical implementation varies. The experts recognise that the department is in a transitional phase, including its staff situation, and that staff change is in progress. This is particularly relevant as the panel identified that procedures are well defined on policy and procedure level, however, that the implementation and provision of relevant data and documentation varies between different courses and faculty in light of level

of detailedness and granularity. In the end the result is an incomplete picture of departmental performance making it hard to implement continuous development activities and effectively manage the programme and student success. In order to advance the practical implementation of the procedures for quality assurance, timely availability of complete information by faculty needs be assured, as these need to be consistent and quality assurance cycles need to be closed (i.e., complete files need to be made available) (**Finding 3**).

The experts found little evidence for an active involvement of stakeholders, particularly labour market and students in the continuous development of the programme. During interviews with students the panel was impressed with the reflectiveness and constructive dialogue with the students and found that indeed they are being heard in cases of problems, while the panel believes that the faculty loses great potential for improvement by not including students more proactively. Within the cultural context of the institution the panel clearly encourages the faculty to identify ways to better and more actively include students in the internal QA structures as relevant stakeholders in the quality assurance structures and bodies of the faculty (**Finding 4**).

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

3. Learning, teaching and assessment of students

The delivery of material encourages students to take an active role in the learning process.
Students are assessed using accessible criteria, regulations, and procedures, which are made readily available to all participants and which are applied consistently.
Assessment procedures are designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
 [ESG 1.3]

Description

According to the SER, students are required to apply the knowledge acquired in lectures and courses, solve problems, do exercises in class and at home, read assigned material and write and/or answer specific questions relevant to the reading before they come to class. Students are also expected to participate in class discussions.

To engage students in the learning process, faculty members use technology in their teaching, i.e. Blackboard LMS and smartboards available on campus, Microsoft Office programmes, multimedia, and internet resources.

Assessment tools used by faculty members typically include midterm and final examinations, quizzes, projects, extended papers, in-class presentations.

If complaints about grades cannot be resolved directly and on an individual basis with faculty members, a student may submit a formal request for a review of their grade. The requests will be directed to the department chair who establishes a committee (two faculty members from the department) in consultation with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs to review the case and submit a report to the Associate Dean.

In addition, the Student Academic Grievances and Appeals Committee (SAGAC) reviews and decides on further appeals. This Committee is appointed by the Vice Chancellor, while the Dean of the College is responsible for final decision in college-specific matters such as requirements regarding the curriculum.

Experts' evaluation

The learning and teaching methods clearly meet the intended learning outcomes. The panel learned that every singly psychology syllabus has been revised to also reflect latest APA standards. A critical part involved a full

revision of the course learning objectives to make them more transparent to students and to provide guidance for their own learning. The enhanced clarity of course objectives also made it clearer to individual course instructors what they need to achieve with their teaching methods. Thus, in principle, the selection of appropriate teaching methods can be made by the faculty member responsible for the course. The panel also learned that at the time of the site visit this was, however, not yet consistently implemented by all faculty members and it remains work in progress to fully onboard all staff. Based on the discussions during the site visit the panel of however believes that the leadership has embarked on a powerful course of development and already at this time the impact visibility is big enough to create evidence to trust in the remaining change to be implemented.

To enable flexible learning paths and stimulate student motivation, self-reflection, and engagement in the learning process, the teaching methods employed by faculty reflect active learning strategies, technology-enhanced learning, experiential learning, collaborative learning, and metacognitive strategies. In 2024, all psychology faculty were requested to identify the teaching methods employed in the classroom such as Socratic questioning, critical article reviews, mini research projects, peer teaching, field trips, podcasts & YouTube lectures, cooperative learning, analysis of current events, structured debate, discovery/inquiry-based learning, generating hypotheses, modelling, peer teaching/collaboration, project-based learning, role play/simulations, structured academic controversy, student goal setting, self-reflective essay as well as video analysis. Students are encouraged to take an active role in their education through student-led seminars, independent research projects, and internships tailored to their interests. These approaches promote student-centred learning, critical thinking, and self-reflection. To ensure that the chosen assessment methods reflect the learning outcomes in the individual courses/modules, each syllabus provided to students in the Psychology programme maps individual assessments to individual course learning outcomes.

The transfer of knowledge to situations outside the university is a central theme of the 400-level applied courses provided by the Psychology programme. Applied courses such as clinical psychology, seminar in psychology, school psychology and internship are deliberately designed to be hands-on and are taught by faculty with extensive practical practice. Teaching in these courses is heavily case-based to enhance learning and reflects competency-based practices. Emphasis is placed on the transfer of knowledge to real-life settings. Furthermore, all students complete a 16-week internship in which students learn foundational competencies in applied practice. The learning objectives for this course specifically target transfer of theory into practice.

Assessment regulations and procedures as well as examination requirements (including grading scales) are generally defined, transparent, and made available to the students. The University has a grading policy which covers e.g., the course grading system, grade point averages, grades in foundation-level courses, student grade access and appeal, retention of grading records, and grade changes.

Instructions and requirements for final exams are published on the University website. The final exams (date and time) are organised by the facilities management department prior to the start of each semester. Each student receives the schedule of their classes and the date of the final exam at the start of the semester. The syllabus for each course is also distributed to all students at the start of the semester. Every syllabus contains a table with the assessment type, the weighting, and the week of the semester in which the exam takes place or the assignment is due. Students can retake an exam based either upon submission of a certified sick note or extenuating personal reasons with approval of the Dean of Student Affairs. Students with particular disadvantages are reported to course instructors via the 'Students with Determination Supporting Service'. All these regulations are documented, accessible, and appropriate.

In summary, the meeting with the senior management and the deans provided a good insight into the organisation of the University, and especially into the embedding of the BA Psychology programme. It became evident that the extensive transformation of the programme is being actively promoted by the University in order to support the development both qualitatively and quantitatively (e.g., infrastructure, facilities, and recruitment

of additional staff). The meeting with staff members as well as the meeting with students led to converging information and allowed a deep insight into the challenges and the progress already made at different levels. The curriculum has undergone major surgery, and this is reason for evidence-based optimism. The panel was impressed by how competently, seriously and thoroughly the necessary steps were taken to redesign the programme. The current staff demonstrated a high level of knowledge, competence, motivation, and involvement in the area of learning, teaching, and assessment. As will be discussed further below, due to a currently unsatisfying student / teacher ratio of 56:1, future admission will be subject to an entry exam and grand point average (GPA) with the option to override GPA in case of exceptional entry exam results. This is work in progress. Also, in light of assuring the implementation of appropriate teaching methods, the number of teaching staff needs to be increased to improve the student-staff ratio (**Finding 5**). The experts are pleased to see the support of the university as well as the optimisation of the recruitment process that is currently already in progress.

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Consistently applied, pre-defined, and published regulations are in place which cover student admission, progression, recognition, and certification.

[ESG 1.4]

Description

Students are admitted to UAEU on the basis of an assessment of their present academic qualifications and the instructional capacities of academic programmes. Admissions to the United Arab Emirates University is based on the admission policy which is issued annually and sets forth the specific admission criteria for each of the following categories: (1) citizens of the United Arab Emirates, (2) MENA region students, (3) students from Asia and Africa, (4) international students, (5) mature students and (6) children of UAEU employees.

Documentation after graduation is undertaken at the University level where documents and Graduation Certificates are secured and archived. In addition, the University uploads the graduates' personal information on the Ministry of Education's website to confirm the authenticity of the documents and facilitate the attestation of their degree certificates if/when necessary.

To be considered for direct admission to the programme, applicants must satisfy the following requirements along with meeting the minimum admission requirements in the appropriate category: All prospective students should have good academic standing with a minimum GPA of 3.3 and an IELTS score of 6.0. In addition, they are required to attend an interview conducted by the faculty members prior to admission.

Experts' evaluation

The admission procedures for the BA programme Psychology at UAEU are clearly defined and transparent. They are based on GPA and language requirements (minimum GPA of 3.3 and IELTS score of 6.0 or equivalent), and this information is made available to prospective students.

A newly planned admission model will include an entry exam. This exam is not yet exactly specified but will allegedly mainly contain subject-related components and skills. This is a positive development, as it moves beyond relying solely on GPA and reflects an effort to identify student potential in a more differentiated way.

The specific prerequisites, such as English proficiency and academic performance, are relevant for the programme and appear to contribute meaningfully to successful study progression. These prerequisites have been recently revised in response to increasing demand and capacity limits.

The University gathers data on the admission procedures of past cohorts, as reflected in its efforts to limit intake and redesign the admission process in a data-driven way.

The credit hour system is well aligned with national regulations, and transfer of credits from other higher education institutions appears to be possible under Ministry of Education frameworks. The CH-to-ECTS equivalency is defined (1 CH = 1 contact hour + 2 hours self-study). The panel found that well and consistently explained in during the visit while on the long run, when there is an increased footprint of internationalization, it might be wise to consider better ways to proactively explain the CH-to-ECTS ratio to outside stakeholders to facilitate and encourage mobility.

Recognition of prior non-formal or informal learning does not appear to be implemented in a structured way.

Regarding student mobility, while there is no indication of systematic outgoing exchange agreements, the University has expressed growing interest in internationalisation, and the programme allows for learning agreements in cases of transfer. The institution's broader strategy suggests that this area may be further developed in the future. In addition, the University could consider opening the programme more actively to incoming exchange students and introducing clearer regulations for the admission of international students – for example by setting a transparent percentage cap per cohort.

Upon graduation, students receive a transcript and degree certificate. It was not explicitly confirmed whether a diploma supplement or comparable document providing transparent information on the qualification and its national and international context is issued; this could be an area for future enhancement to support international mobility and recognition.

Furthermore, there appears to be a need for clearer and more accessible information provided to students regarding possible professional pathways after graduation. Specifically, students expressed uncertainty about the requirements and procedures for professional licensure in psychology within the UAE. This includes which roles can be pursued with a Bachelor's degree alone (e.g., assistant psychologist positions), and which require a Master's degree – especially in the clinical field. Similarly, information on where and how to pursue a relevant Master's programme, including whether progression at UAEU is possible, seems to be lacking or insufficiently communicated. Given the importance of these aspects for career planning and motivation, the programme should consider implementing structured guidance and transparent communication on post-graduate opportunities and licensure options and intensify its exchange with the labour market in ways that directly impact student experience and information (see **Finding 1**).

In conclusion, the programme has well-structured admission and progression processes which are under active development and responsive to growing student numbers. The current procedures ensure student success and progression, and further steps toward recognition of prior learning, international student regulation, and mobility mechanisms would strengthen alignment with international standards.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

5. Teaching staff

The composition (quantity, qualifications, professional and international experience, etc.) of the staff is appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Staff involved with teaching is qualified and competent to do so.

Transparent procedures are in place for the recruitment and development of staff.

[ESG 1.5]

Description

The SER holds that recruitment procedures for teaching staff at faculty and instructor level are fair and consistent and are specified in the University's policies on academic appointments and the employee handbook.

Ten faculty members and three instructors (with another faculty member expected to join in SP25) contribute to the programme. They come from diverse backgrounds including the USA, the UAE, Jordan, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Brazil, Egypt and India.

Support for faculty is provided in the form of pedagogical training, research funding, and specialist laboratories. The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers faculty and instructors a wide range of opportunities to develop and enhance their performance as teaching professionals. A particular focus of the Center is the promotion of emerging digital technologies. CETL comprises the following four units:

- Instructional Design Unit
- Teaching, Scholarship and Assessment Unit
- Faculty Professional Development Unit
- PhD Students Teaching Academy

Financial support is provided for CHSS faculty to attend one international conference every year if they have an accepted paper in an event related to their discipline. Additional conference participations require external funding. Faculty are also encouraged to attend and present papers at pedagogical conferences.

Experts' evaluation

The University has provided a list of 13 teaching staff members with an internationally diverse background who are involved in the programme, including their academic qualifications, research activities, and other relevant credentials. The staff members are or have been engaged in scientific research and are appropriately qualified in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

The information regarding the current teaching hours of staff members is inconsistent. The university management reports that a system of differentiated teaching loads has recently been introduced, depending on research activities. This system includes three categories: teaching track, research track, and rigorous track. All staff members are required to engage in teaching, research, and service, but in different proportions. Faculty members are generally free to choose their track. However, there is no specific and concrete information on the overall workload and its distribution among teaching, research, and administrative duties. The panel carefully discussed this aspect and found that this perceived inconsistency in clarity does not seem to affect those involved in the department and the panel concluded that this impression was probably based on information coming from different sources with different nuances of clarity.

Most staff members have fixed term contracts, and the university and college management have stated that there are plans to expand the faculty and allocate resources to growing fields without major restrictions. There is some fluctuation in teaching staff, and university, college, and programme managers have demonstrated that an active recruitment process is ongoing. However, finding suitable candidates is challenging and time-

consuming. Currently, four positions are advertised on the University's website. Additionally, there is an increased effort to recruit internationally. Teaching assistant positions have also been introduced to reduce the workload of teaching staff. However, at this time the panel could not see the involvement of external lecturers.

Regarding staff development and training in teaching competencies, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) offers courses on teaching methods. Participation in these courses is voluntary, and there is no mechanism to require staff to attend. However, participation is considered in promotion and career decisions.

The current student-to-teaching staff ratio is 56 to 1, which is above both college and university averages. The university management explains that a regulatory change two years ago allowed students to enter majors directly, leading to overcrowding in certain fields, including psychology. In response, management has taken action at various levels. In addition to hiring new staff, new regulations have been introduced to define programme capacity and limit student intake. This semester, out of 123 applications, only 31 students were accepted based on GPA.

While recognizing the foreseeable impact of the newly implemented admission regulations, the student-to-teacher ratio needs to be improved by raising the number of teaching staff (**Finding 5**). The current ratio is only sufficient for conducting traditional lectures but does not support more interactive, practical, or reflective teaching methods such as lab courses or seminars.

Additionally, the panel encourages to increase transparency on the workload and teaching load of staff more explicitly (**Finding 6**), which may also help make these positions more attractive when recruiting new staff. Furthermore, from the experts' point of view the hiring strategy could be further developed, particularly in terms of international recruitment and be advanced beyond the promotion on the university website.

Finally, as an action of further development, voluntary participation in teaching training programmes could be more explicitly integrated into career planning and promotion decisions for teaching staff, or even included as part of a systematic staff development plan.

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

6. Learning resources and student support

Appropriate facilities and resources are available for learning and teaching activities.

Guidance and support is available for students which includes advice on achieving a successful completion of their studies.

[ESG 1.6]

Description

The SER states that all classrooms are equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including desktops, laptops, interactive smartboards, and AV systems. IT Support Services provide a user-friendly environment which fosters the daily use of information technology to better facilitate teaching, learning and research. The IT Help Desk provides assistance with any technology-related issues in the classroom or else.

Students in the Psychology programme have access to a Cognitive Sciences Laboratory dedicated to experimental research as well as Electroencephalography (EEG) and Eye-Tracking equipment.

The library ensures access to a wide range of electronic resources and services. If an item is not in the UAEU collection, faculty and students can request it through an online document delivery service. The library also offers library instruction sessions for students. Faculty can also request the purchase of specific books or resources.

On admission, each student is assigned to a faculty member as academic supervisor who keep track of main registration policies and students' study plans (also via the online Degree Works programme). Students develop a study plan for each semester in consultation with their faculty supervisor.

Experts' evaluation

The Psychology programme at UAEU benefits from university-wide infrastructure, such as a modern central library, learning spaces, and IT systems. In addition to these shared resources, the programme also has access to psychology-specific learning environments and equipment. These include an eye-tracker, EEG systems, and computers with E-Prime installed, located in a lab with a trained assistant. The assistant is receiving further training, for example in statistics, to improve the lab's support capacity. The equipment was described as well maintained, and resources are planned to ensure sustainability of use over at least five years.

The psychology lab is already embedded into teaching: in at least one course, E-Prime is used as part of assessment, and further integration is foreseen, especially in experimental psychology. The use of digital platforms such as Blackboard, SafeAssign, and other e-learning tools is common across teaching staff.

Students benefit from the university-wide support services, including academic advising, writing and speaking centres, and the Student Academic Success Program. These services are well structured and accessible. In addition, students may work as paid research assistants and receive certificates for their involvement. However, no teaching assistant (TA) positions currently exist in the department.

The advisory system is described as highly relevant in practice. Advisors help students with course planning, including balancing workload and monitoring progression. Students expressed satisfaction with the new system of course sequencing, which they perceived as more coherent and supportive of their academic progression. The programme assumes a workload of 37.5 hours per week based on the credit hour model (1 CH = 1 contact hour + 2 hours of self-study), which corresponds well to international standards.

A major strength of the programme is its internship and research project options in the final year. The internship includes 375 hours of supervised fieldwork and is clearly structured with a weekly reporting system, transparent grading, and defined learning outcomes. Students also have the opportunity to complete a senior research project under individual supervision. Both options serve as a capstone experience and support the application of theoretical knowledge.

While students were generally satisfied with support structures, some mentioned a wish for more consistent inclusion of practical elements in earlier courses, and for more clarity about research and clinical career pathways – which ties into broader programme design and communication, not support services as such.

Overall, the infrastructure and support services provided for learning and teaching are well-developed, subject-specific, and aligned with the programme's goals. Further enhancement could be achieved through expanding the integration of practical resources across all levels and considering the establishment of structured TA roles.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7. Information

Impartial and objective, up-to-date information regarding the programme and its qualifications is published regularly. This published information is appropriate for and available to relevant stakeholders.
[ESG 1.8]

Description

The SER describes that the psychology programme information is found on the university website. The website provides various information about the programme such as programme learning objectives, Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO), required and electives course, etc.

Experts' evaluation

The UAEU website provides information about the BA programme Psychology, the learning outcomes, and an exemplary study plan. Furthermore, all courses are described in detail regarding content, credit hours, prerequisites, and learning outcomes. In addition, students have access to excellent resources such as the student handbook and the internship handbook. However, there is no easily findable publicly available information regarding the staff or selection procedures. Moreover, the experts had no insight into other channels of communication.

While the website generally provides sufficient information, the panel encourages to further improve the structure to design it in ways that information becomes more easily available also and specifically for external stakeholders (**Finding 7**). For example, the relationship between the Psychology programme and the General Education clusters remains unclear. In addition, the study information could offer more insights into the teaching staff, student experiences, and general resources and equipment (e.g., lab facilities), which are among the strengths of the study programme and should be promoted accordingly.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

V. Recommendation of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends accrediting the study programme "Psychology" offered by United Arab Emirates University with conditions.

Commendation:

The experts see the challenges that the department addressed in the past year and commend the energy and passion witnessed during the site visit. They encountered a programme in the middle of substantial and valuable change and are – based on evidence - optimistic regarding the enhancement of the programme. The experts highlight the variety of teaching methods, the library and lab equipment, and especially the statistic licences as major assets of the programme.

Findings:

1. The link and exchange with the labour market should be strengthened to ensure that BA graduates gain an understanding of the market and that requirements of the labour market are more directly considered

in the continuous development of the programme. Information on the job opportunities for BA graduate should be transparently available.

2. The curricular focus of the programme should be sharpened and aligned with research profiles of involved staff and consequently visibly promoted across all relevant channels.
3. The practical implementation of the procedures for quality assurance needs to be consistent and the quality assurance cycles need to be closed (i.e. complete files need to be made available).
4. The faculty should include students as relevant stakeholders in the quality assurance structures and bodies of the faculty.
5. A higher number of teaching staff is needed to improve the student-staff ratio and to fill the experience gaps in the staff portfolio.
6. The workload and teaching load of staff should be more transparently specified.
7. Public information should be made widely available and also targeted at external stakeholders (e.g., practitioners, international experts) and a broader audience interested in the study programme.