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QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH
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STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

FINAL REPORT

AL FALAH UNIVERSITY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

CLUSTER MASS COMMUNICATION

PUBLIC RELATIONS (BACHELOR IN MASS COMMUNICATION)

NEW MEDIA (BACHELOR IN MASS COMMUNICATION)

ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM (BACHELOR IN MASS COMMUNICATION)

AUGUST 2023



Content

Decision of the Accreditation Commission of AQAS	3
I. Preamble	6
II. Accreditation procedure.....	6
1. Criteria.....	6
2. Approach and methodology	6
III. General information on the university	Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.
IV. Assessment of the study programmes.....	8
1. Quality of the curriculum	15
2. Procedures for quality assurance	17
3. Learning, teaching and assessment of students	18
4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification.....	Fehler! Textmarke nicht definiert.
5. Teaching staff.....	20
6. Learning resources and student support	21
7. Information	22
V. Recommendation of the panel of experts.....	24

DECISION OF THE AQAS COMMISSION

ON THE BACHELOR PROGRAMMES

“NEW MEDIA” (BACHELOR)

“PUBLIC RELATIONS” (BACHELOR)

“ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM” (BACHELOR)

OFFERED BY AL FALAH UNIVERSITY (UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)

Following the decision of 6 December 2021 to postpone a decision on the accreditation and based on the discussions of the AQAS Commission in its 18th meeting on 23 August 2023, the AQAS Commission decides:

1. The university did not request to continue the accreditation procedure within the given period of 18 months (see decision of 6 December 2021) and did not provide renewed documentation of the study programmes. The Standing Commission reopens the procedure.
2. The accreditations for the Bachelor programmes “**Public Relations**” (Bachelor of Mass Communication), “**New Media**” (Bachelor of Mass Communication), and “**Electronic Journalism**” (Bachelor of Mass Communication) offered by the Al Falah University in United Arab Emirates are denied.

The study programmes do not fulfil the AQAS criteria for programme accreditation and the Standards for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version.

Based on the report of the expert panel and the discussions of the AQAS Commission in its 11th meeting on 6 December 2021, the AQAS Commission decides:

1. The accreditation decisions for the Bachelor programmes “Public Relations” (Bachelor of Mass Communication), “New Media” (Bachelor of Mass Communication), and “Electronic Journalism” (Bachelor of Mass Communication) offered by the Al Falah University in United Arab Emirates are postponed.

The study programmes do not yet fulfil all Standards for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) in their current version. However, it is likely that the shortcomings can be remedied within 18 months.

2. The postponement period lasts for a maximum of 18 months and ends on 30 June 2023. The university has the opportunity to revise the study programmes during this period.
3. The revised documentation will be reviewed by the expert panel. If considered necessary by the expert panel, a second site visit must be organised. The accreditation commission then takes a final decision based on the expert panel’s updated report.

The accreditation commission points out that the university must request to continue the accreditation procedure in written form within the given period. The revised documentation must be submitted in writing no

later than 30 June 2023. If the university does not request the continuation of the accreditation procedure or does not hand in the revised documentation within the given period, AQAS will automatically reopen the procedure and deny the accreditation.

Findings:

1. The academic character of the programmes must be strengthened. This must be reflected in the intended learning outcomes on course level and on programme level. In particular, the graduation project must also demonstrate the achievement of the academic programme learning outcomes.
2. The college should assure that the programmes develop their Unique Scientific Position/Unique Selling Position to enhance scientific visibility and also attract students (from abroad).
- 2a The character and the profile of each programme should be developed independently according to the specific academic and labour market requirements and include clear-cut discipline-related courses.
3. COMC should implement a more comprehensive and detailed benchmarking for the programmes that include (but are not limited to) comparison of aims, Programme-ILOs, learning sources, curriculum, academic programme structure, and assessment tools. Benchmarking partners should be universities that come from three different levels: local, regional and international.
4. In the New Media programme, the titles of the courses should be carefully reviewed to ensure they reflect the contents and intended learning outcomes.
5. In the New Media programme, the use of international literature also in English language should be increased.
6. The E-Journalism programme should integrate topics of digital business models and media production, e.g. as elective courses to enable graduates to work entrepreneurially.
7. Course descriptions must be complete and demonstrate a certain level of comparability with regards to level of detail.
8. A more balanced assessment of theoretical, empirical (if so) and at the same time operative application is required. The College needs to assure that also the achievement of the academic learning outcomes on course level is assessed as part of the examinations, particularly in the final project.
9. Re-sit options within the same semester should be considered.
10. The College should consider possibilities of integrating external moderation for the graduation projects and potentially even key courses of their curriculum.
11. The college should assure appropriate staff resources to increase research activities.
12. The required academic broadness of the curricula must be covered by appropriate academic staff resources.
13. The College should consider adding international guest lecturers and visiting professors to the staff portfolio.
14. The access to (international) literature must be significantly increased with a special focus on discipline-related publications (books and journals).
15. The College – when reflecting on the scientific and academic representation in assessment and outcomes – should assure that the course descriptions are fully consistent and reflect the true teaching content and outcomes in order to increase the required amount of transparency.

**EXPERTS REPORT
ON THE BACHELOR PROGRAMMES
“NEW MEDIA” (BACHELOR)
“PUBLIC RELATIONS” (BACHELOR)
“ELECTRONIC JOURNALISM” (BACHELOR)**

OFFERED BY AL FALAH UNIVERSITY (UNITED ARAB EMIRATES)

Visit to the university: 20–22 September 2021

Panel of Experts:

Prof. Dr. Amani Al Halwachi	University of Bahrain (Bahrain), Department of Mass Communication & Head of Quality Assurance
Prof. Dr. Jan Lies	FOM University of Applied Sciences (Germany), Professor for Public Relations and consultant for strategic public relations, change communications and branding.
Prof. Dr. Martin Müller	University of Applied Sciences Ansbach (Germany), Chair for Practical Journalism
Eric Karstens	Media Consultant, former Managing Director carus Media, Cologne (Germany) (representative from the labour market)
Robert Raback	Student “Information Sciences” at University of Applied Sciences Potsdam, Germany (student expert)
Coordinators:	
Ronny Heintze & Patrick Heinzer	AQAS, Cologne, Germany

- **Preamble**

AQAS – Agency for Quality Assurance through Accreditation of Study Programmes – is an independent non-profit organisation, supported by more than 90 member institutions, both higher education institutions (HEIs) and academic associations. Since 2002, the agency has been accredited by the German Accreditation Council (GAC). It is therefore a notified body for 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 both academic studies and teaching in Higher Education Institutions. The activities of AQAS in accreditation are neither restrained to specific academic disciplines or degrees nor to a certain type of Higher Education Institution

- **Accreditation procedure**

This report results from the external review of the Bachelor's degree programmes in "New Media", "Public Relations" and "Electronic Journalism" offered by Al Falah University (United Arab Emirates).

- **Criteria**

The programme is assessed against a set of criteria for programme accreditation developed by AQAS. 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 the programme since not all indicators necessarily can be applied to a programme.

- **Approach and methodology**

The initialisation

The university mandated AQAS to perform the accreditation procedure in October 2020.

The Al Falah University elaborated a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In February 2021, the institution handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation of the study programme and an appendix of statistical data on the programme.

The appendix included e.g.:

- Overview over statistical data of the student body (e.g. number of applications, beginners, students, graduates, student drop outs).
- CVs of the teaching staff
- Information on student services
- Core information on the main library

- Undergraduate 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 22 February 2021. The final version of the SER was handed in May 2021.

The nomination of the panel of experts

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently, representatives from the respective discipline/s, the labour market and students are involved. Furthermore, AQAS follows principles for the selection of experts of the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA).

In July 2021, the Standing Commission nominated the before mentioned expert panel. 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.

The 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 the panel members in order to increase transparency in the process and the upcoming discussions during the site visit.

The site visit

After a review of the Self Evaluation Report, a site visit to the University took place from 20 – 22 September 2021. On site, the experts interviewed different stakeholders, e.g. the management of the HEI, the programme management, teaching and other staff, as well as students and graduates, in separate discussions and consulted additional documentation as well as student work. The visit concluded by the presentation of the preliminary findings of the group of experts to the University's representatives.

The report writing

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

The decision

The report, together with the comments of the department, forms the basis for the AQAS Standing Commission to make a decision regarding the accreditation of the programme. Based on these two documents, on 6 December 2021 the Standing Commission took its decision on the accreditation. AQAS forwarded the decision to the university. The university had the right to appeal against the decision or any of the imposed conditions.

In January 2022, AQAS published the report and the result of the accreditation as well as the names of the panel of experts.

• **General Information on the University**

Al Falah University (AFU) was established in 2015 and also accepted its first batch of students in the same year. As the SER describes, the university is located in the heart of the Emirate of Dubai and its current academic programmes in the College of Business Administration, the College of Law, the College of Mass Communication, and the College of Arts and Humanities have been selected based on established demand from

students, the availability of qualified faculty members with the ability to link theory with practice in their research-led teaching, and the needs of the nation's public and private sectors for graduates in these disciplines.

The SER describes that AFU's core mission is to help graduates to shape the future by preparing them to contribute ethically as developing leaders in their fields to inspire the next generation to the welfare of the society; nationally and internationally.

The College of Mass Communication (COMC) was also established in 2015 with the aim of preparing qualified graduates in media field, to face the challenges of media market in UAE, GCC and the Arab region, through effective communication skills, and implementation of advanced media technologies. COMC is a medium size college with average number of students between 200–260 in all previous semesters, in the three described majors: New Media, Public Relation and Journalism.

- **Assessment of the study programmes**

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

COMC offers three four-year programmes in the field of Mass communication that in the past were specializations, but recently were developed into independent majors: New Media, Public Relations, and Journalism. The main language of instructing courses is Arabic language with some courses in English. According to AFU, the programmes are designed to produce graduates who are ready to be recruited in Media-, PR- and Journalism-related jobs globally. The programmes should also provide digital skills that are essential for students to keep up with the technological revolution that continually produces fresh information and help them monitor such breakthroughs on the internet and universities worldwide. The degree is awarded upon successful completion of 126 credit hours, normally completed in four academic years (8 semesters) for each major.

Following the self-evaluation report, the department has defined six intended learning outcomes (ILO) on the programme level, out of which three are applicable cross-cutting ILOs to all three programmes, and three are programme specific ILOs.

Each of the three majors has a total of 126 Credit Points (CP). The curricula of the majors are built on ten university-wide general education courses (30 CP), out of which two courses with 3 CP each are elective courses, 22 courses on college discipline-specific topics (66 CP; two courses with three CP each are elective courses), and ten compulsory courses specific to the major (30 CP). General education courses address aspects of the UAE society, principles of statistics, or English skills for academic writing. Compulsory college requirements, which make up the largest portion of the curriculum, cover introduction to journalism or new media, research methodology, introduction to sociology or e-commerce, besides courses in digital photography, communication theories and public opinion.

The specific courses for each major then build upon the general college courses and develop the skills and competencies in mass communication specific to the selected field. Each major contains a graduation project with three credit hours as well as an internship.

New Media

The aims of the new media major lie in raising the level of graduates' technological competence and future skills by refining technical skills such as photography and montage, design of websites, social media and artificial intelligence. Furthermore, it aims at raising the level of writing and writing competence through professional methods and converting it into appropriate formats in the new media environment, while also motivating students to interact with social, cultural and economic issues etc. via new media implementation.

Public Relations

AFU provides a Bachelor of Mass Communication focused on Public Relations. According to AFU, it educates graduates with creativity who can effectively meet the needs of this sector, which is explained to be increasingly broad-based, dynamic and undergoing constant innovation. The aim of this programme is to enable students to understand the principles of public relations and advertising and to explain the ways in which they can be used to develop successful PR and advertising strategies that will help the expanding sector in the UAE.

E-Journalism

As a third bachelor programme, AFU implemented a Bachelor of Mass Communication focussing on Electronic Journalism. Since in modern society, especially in UAE, news media have become the chief purveyor of information and opinion about public affairs, AFU intends to provide the country with well-educated and skilled graduates that are capable of holding this responsibility in UAE. Students learn to use modern E-journalism techniques, develop writing competence and are motivated to interact with social, cultural and economic, etc. issues as journalistic topics.

Experts' evaluation

For all majors

The curricula of all three programmes positively showcase the strengths of Al Falah University and provide room for improvement at the same time: The strengths clearly emphasize the experience of the university to address the needs of the local labour markets. The experts interviewed representatives of typical employers, which were invited from the university to explain their needs and are experienced with employing young graduates of Al Falah. According to the employers, the requirements are covered by the knowledge generated with the curriculum of the three majors in mass communication: New Media, Public Relations and E-Journalism. The interviewed employers at the site visit highlighted especially the operative competencies of the graduates in their specialized areas of expertise. From the didactical point of view, the curricula and learning objectives of each programme are documented and controlled with outcome related criteria, particularly with references to skills development. The discussion with the representatives of the programmes and students during the site visit at the campus in September 2021 revealed that the College implements its courses transparently, and focusses teaching on needs of current employers. This well integrated curricular reflection of the requirements of the labour market means a strength for the students. It constitutes a solid foundation for the three programmes that overall are well designed and offer a variety of courses in the respective fields that build on each other, also facilitating learners' progression.

Despite this labour market related strength of all three curricula this also points to some clearly identified room for improvement in the overall design of each of the programmes. While focussing on skills and competencies close to application (which supports employability), the academic skillset required to meet the qualification of a bachelor remains underdeveloped in each of these programmes. This applies to the Intended Learning

Outcomes on programme level but also to individual course level. While programmes include final projects, the evidence on the achievement of learning outcomes could be stronger, and for academic achievement clearly requires development (**Finding 1**).

Particularly since, during the site visit, the management of Al Falah emphasized that the university aims to become a top 10 university of the region, this will require an appropriate academic character of its programmes. From a strategic (scientific) management point of view, that means the university aims at entering the intensive international competition of global education. With regard to the three programmes under review, which recently became individual majors while formerly being specializations of one field, the need to strengthen the academic character of the programmes is further supported by the following consideration:

As defined by the title of the degree, a precondition for a bachelor's degree, which is a first academic qualification of higher education, is a defined and focused scientific understanding of the field of mass communication, i.e. scientific approach. It frames and justifies the curriculum and, thus, the idea of mass communication of Al Falah. This could be called [unique] scientific position. The challenge of the College will be to find, elaborate and commit themselves to a specific and [potentially unique] scientific understanding, which represents the character of Al Falah. At this moment, the mass communication scientific reflection, i.e. the distinguishing (!) character of COMC of Al Falah as an institution of higher education focussing on mass communication, is not yet clear when considering its programmes. Nevertheless, the curricula of the three programmes in new media, public relations, and e-journalism, already indicate that the College is prepared to succeed here in the future and is on a good path. A cross-disciplinary view on the selected courses indicates the openness and intention to educate students holistically with managerial, communicative, social, psychological, cultural, and methodical-empirical skills.

To reflect the academic character, it is recommended to look out for a cross-scientific approach of integrated theories, which (a) frames the scientific idea of mass communication of Al Falah (or is 'contemporary communication' the more appropriate term instead of 'mass communication', which a growing number of scientists claim to be outdated?); (b) justifies the broad curricula of the programmes; (c) provides room to progressively evolve the curricula of all programmes; and (d) allows the teaching staff as well as students to focus their research.

Besides, neither the review of the curricula nor the SER is appropriate to explain what marks a specific Unique Selling Point or Unique Scientific Position (USP) of the three programmes. After also analysing the website and provided information material, especially the faculty handbook, the USP remains to be elaborated. Since meanwhile, the programmes have developed into individual majors, it can be expected that each of the majors also develops an individual academic qualification profile (**Finding 2**). At this point the programmes – quite freshly incorporated as majors – do not have a programme specific academic profile. To the panel of experts, it seems inevitable to increase the number of clear-cut discipline-related courses in each of the majors to justify their individual academic achievement (**Finding 2a**). This will not only help build academic reputation, but also attract students from different backgrounds and abroad. Clearly, the expert panel believes that the explained challenges to a certain extent reflect the challenges of a young institution, which still is in the process of setting up structures and developing its own academic standards. The panel believes that the College with its leadership is on a good path and in light of the short time of existence of the programmes, a lot was already achieved. At this time, the College should reflect on this achievement and move to the next level of prioritizing academic development at the different levels. In this case, some more time will also support generating stronger evidence for this achievement.

The panel believes that strengthening the academic character is mandatory to also demonstrate the achievement of the Bachelor level of not only the European Qualifications Framework but also the QF Emirates.

The panel also carefully discussed the curriculum development approach with college representatives and generally supports the benchmarking approach chosen by COMC. However, to better support enhancement within COMC, it is encouraged that the programme leaders use benchmarking in a more comprehensive and clear manner, as the document provided by the college was rather brief and it includes little details. The chosen benchmarking Universities were all local, and the extent of detail in which benchmarking happened, was not fully transparent including the respective findings. Consequently, curricular development could be further supported by a more comprehensive benchmarking with different level universities (local, regional, international) including (but not limited to) aims, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, learning sources, curriculum, academic programme structure, and assessment tools. Also, it is preferable to choose institutions similar to the University in a variety of aspects, such as, but not limited to, the mission, size, programmes, disciplines, cultural similarity (**Finding 3**).

New Media

The intended learning outcomes of the New Media programme are both subject-specific and interdisciplinary in nature. Also, they aim to correspond to level six of the European Qualifications Framework, as the intended learning outcomes indicate its added value, which includes advanced knowledge of a field of work or study, involving a critical understanding of theories and principles, including a good range of cognitive and practical skills to develop solutions to abstract problems, and manage complex technical, professional activities and projects. With regards to the applied skills and competencies close to the labour market, the achievement of the level clearly can be confirmed as a strength of the programme. The reflection of the critical understanding of theories and principles – the academic part of the qualification –, however, requires development as explained above as at this time the achievement is not fully supported by graduation projects or student work (**see Finding 1**).

The programme's elements are generally well documented differentiating between compulsory and mandatory courses in the curriculum. Credits are assigned to every course, which creates comparability in terms of workload and contact hours. Curricular modifications are documented and contribute to an improvement in programme quality.

The approach that the department pursues with the programme is practice-oriented and trains students in the applicable skills in the specific area of digital media. Practical skills are fostered by an internship, which is usually carried out with well-known regional companies like Dubai Media Production City. Clearly, it is a plus for students and the panel of experts highlight the importance of the good curricular integration of it. It can also be confirmed that the order of curricular elements supports the learner's progression. Therefore, the study programme is developing very dynamically to meet the expectations of the labour market better and to produce well-trained graduates.

The College uses evaluations and graduate surveys to get feedback from the stakeholders on required skills and needs in the field, which enables the update of the intended learning outcomes according to current developments in the labour market.

While reviewing the course descriptions, it became obvious that in some cases it is required to update the titles of the courses and ensure they reflect the contents and intended outcomes, for instance, the Infographics course, which includes a different set of practical skills that go beyond what could be expected from the title of the course. This will help to increase transparency and increase alignment between descriptions and documentation (**Finding 4**).

The language of instruction of the programme is Arabic. At the same time developments in the field of New Media are quick, and many of the latest developments are only reflected in English-language literature. This causes a challenge and was also discussed during the site visit. One example is the course "Artificial

Intelligence Applications in the Fields of Media", as this course should have the latest applied technology, however, it has only Arabic textbooks as learning sources. As intermediate English language proficiency is required to enter the programmes, consequently the College should assure that the relevant international English-language literature is also used in the programme to reflect the required new developments in the field (**Finding 5**). In the same context, it is worth mentioning that the "Social Network Course" and "Writing for New Media course" syllabuses does not include any core textbooks or references. A stronger consistency in the documentation should be encouraged by the College.

Public Relations (PR)

Clearly, the current curriculum on the one hand is attractive from the scientific view of public relations. Especially the broad range of scientific areas including management science, communication, sociology, psychology or cultural science create a broad range of perspectives towards PR. Additionally, operative skills like writing skills or e-commerce shape the programme which makes graduates highly attractive for local employers. It is a strong asset of the programme that the objectives of the programme are clearly defined (e.g. raising the level of students' efficiency in developing, implementing and evaluating plans for activities and events) and are operationalized by course specific tasks. On the other hand, this broad scope of courses indicates some opportunities to improve at the same time: This becomes apparent as soon as AFU goals are considered: The applied understanding of PR seems to be PR Management, i.e. the management of reputation by sustaining relations. In a rigorous view, the course related goals emphasize the operative PR skills of the programme. A gap between the course related objectives and AFU's goal seems to be apparent from the scientific point of view. For example, AFU's goal of refining student's personality to be an active and productive member of society should be structurally embedded into to the programme related objectives. Although social and personality related courses (e.g. media ethics, renewable source of energy) are part of the curriculum, there is room to enhance scientific quality, in particular AFU goal related programmatic and international articulation. A structural link to AFU's student, teaching and research goals on the one hand, and to the aim of internationalization on the other, are to recommend. Especially the methodical limitations in (quantitative) media science should be addressed and these contents should be provided earlier in the guidance plan aiming to educate scientific skills systematically across the curriculum. As part of the encouraged further development explained above, the panel of experts believes that these adjustments should be easy to implement for the College (**see Finding 1**). "Mass communication" traditionally emphasizes communication theory and media science, which are also part of the curriculum. In contrast, management science focuses on organizational and corporate processes. Indeed, both views of PR are relevant. The broad curriculum already accepts this challenge but lacks a defined scientific understanding of PR (-management?). When working on strengthening the academic character of the programme, it might be wise to ensure that the academic concept of the PR approach of the College becomes visible in the programme, its aims, and the outcomes.

E-Journalism

Overall, the specific curriculum of the Bachelor programme for E-Journalism provides a solid impression in terms of its versatility. It is positive to note that a solid breadth of modules specific to e-journalism is covered. Since journalists today are increasingly becoming independent content producers who must produce their cross-media content entirely by themselves, modules such as "Electronic Journalism Publishing", "Infographic Journalism" or "Photojournalism" are of great value for professional practice. The Internship and the "Graduation Project" support this approach. Among the basic courses in semesters one to three, there is also interesting teaching content, although some modules are again less relevant for future e-journalists but come as required courses in all academic programmes of the university. Overall, based on the solid foundation, there is potential to tailor the curriculum even more to the needs of future e-journalists and consequently make it more attractive to future students in the coming years.

During the various discussions with the representatives of Al Falah University and the representatives of the labour market, it became clear that the e-journalism programme is very much tailored to the local labour market and its specific requirements. On the one hand, this is a great strength, as it allows graduates to easily enter the local labour market. On the other hand, with the intention of Al Falah to go beyond this focus is a little too local-specific.

It would be advisable to implement more courses referring to practical cross-media qualifications, which are indispensable in e-journalism or digital journalism today. With such knowledge, students can also increase their benefit from an internship. For example, the very important area of media production (e.g. audio recording, electronic image processing, video editing, content management, etc.) could be expanded in the bachelor's degree programme in e-journalism. A course on content centric digital business models (e.g. as elective) would also be recommended. Such enhancements of the curriculum would also better reflect the requirements of the international labour market (**Finding 6**).

With regard to the scientific nature of the programme, the overall thoughts raised above also apply to this major. A practically oriented teaching approach in a journalism programme automatically poses challenges in keeping the degree programme very scientific at the same time. Currently, however, a clear (competitive) scientific profile is not visible at this time. This profile has yet to be sharpened, as the scientific activities to date appear very broad and unspecific. In order to pursue a practice-oriented approach here as well, it would possibly make sense to conduct interdisciplinary research with other faculties; for example, with business economists on e-journalism business models or with lawyers on aspects of media law in online media. The expert panel is optimistic that the talent available in the COMC will define its path best fitting the priorities of the College.

The documents that students receive to organize their studies are appropriate and sometimes quite detailed. Some of the course descriptions could be more consistent and a few descriptions seem incomplete. This should be addressed, and course descriptions should demonstrate a certain level of comparability with regards to level of detail and should be complete. This is also relevant for the other two majors (**Finding 7**). Nevertheless, interviews with students have shown clearly that the College takes excellent care of its students by finding individual solutions and explaining whenever required.

Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled.

1. The academic character of the programmes must be strengthened. This must be reflected in intended learning outcomes on the course level and on the programme level. In particular the graduation project must demonstrate the achievement of (academic) programme learning outcomes.
2. The college should assure that the programmes develop their Unique Scientific Position/ Unique Selling Position to enhance scientific visibility and also attract students (from abroad).
- 2a The character and the profile of each programme should be developed independently according to the specific requirements and include more clear-cut discipline-related courses.
3. COMC should implement a more comprehensive and detailed benchmarking for the programmes that include (but are not limited to) comparison of aims, PILOs, learning sources, curriculum, academic programme structure, and assessment tools, and ensure to choose three universities that are from three levels; local, regional and international. Also, it is preferable to choose institutions similar to the University in a variety of aspects such as, but not limited to, the mission, size, programmes, disciplines, cultural similarity.

4. In the New Media programme, the titles of the courses should be carefully reviewed to ensure they reflect the contents and intended learning outcomes.
5. In the New Media programme, the use of international literature also in English language should be increased.
6. The E-Journalism programme should integrate topics of Digital Business Models and Media Production, e.g. as elective courses to enable graduates to work entrepreneurially.
7. Course descriptions should be complete and demonstrate a certain level of comparability with regards to level of detail.

- **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

To achieve the quality objectives of the College, the SER describes that a university-wide formalized system of quality assurance and institutional effectiveness (QAIE) has been designed. It is described as the systematic, structured, and continuous attention to quality in terms of maintaining and improving quality to ensure that it is effectively and efficiently attaining its mission in the following areas: (1) Academic programmes; (2) Research; (3) Academic services; (4) Administrative services; (5) Public service. There is a separate Quality Assurance/Institutional Effectiveness Policy in place that, besides many other aspects, also covers the three specializations under review. This policy was created in 2019 and focuses on the quality assurance system, continuous quality enhancement, and the quality assurance unit.

The quality assurance system is described to comprise the management, the review, and the enhancement of quality. The performance indicators indicated in the SER are the performance in education, research, "third mission" activities for the community, and the quality management. Weekly meetings are said to be held between QAIE and the president of AFU to discuss internal and external QA activities. On university level, an internal quality management system (IQMS) has been installed recently to mentor, report and review all activities on college and department level. Furthermore, QAIE's responsibilities are annual institutional reports (including performance indicators, institutional planning, and reports), the analysis of internal evaluations, effectiveness reports, assistance to the implementation of QA related topics. The monitoring processes of the department and therefore each programme includes employers' surveys, alumni surveys, student surveys, input from the advisory board, the results of QAIE, and the course file comprehensive reports.

A part of the evaluation activities also involve employers through the formation of Advisory Groups, Curriculum Development Think Tanks and other such entities. The SER describes that it is the responsibility of each College to organize meetings with employers, record deliberations and include recommendations within their

Annual Plans. Also, it is described that the Advisory Board shall have a minimum of two meetings every year to inform about the procedure in the first meeting and outcomes in the last meeting.

AFU describes that the role of stakeholders is considered by three main components (alumni, employers, and the advisory board). On university level, AFU has implemented a structure that aims to ensure the alumni engagement efficiently following a university-wide policy. Potential employers of graduates are shaping and giving labour market related input through the advisory boards and the joint discussions with the academic programme management team. The SER outlines that another factor of employers' engagement is done through internships and events organised within the student support services.

The role of the advisory board is described to be part of a reflection process aiming at the constant update of the curricula. The board consists of media experts, provides information on internship possibilities, and meets at least twice a year.

The SER indicates which data is collected and clarifies the responsibilities. The data collection comprises student satisfaction surveys, dean's and department performance evaluations, the faculty satisfaction survey, and other surveys covering internal and external stakeholders (e.g. staff performance and satisfaction survey, professional skills assessment, alumni survey, employers' satisfaction).

Experts' Evaluation

AFU's Quality Management process with respect to the contents of the three academic programmes is distinguished by two factors: First, a very clear, logically structured, yet streamlined administrative setup, and second, its very close follow-up on emerging and fading market demands as well as technological developments. The system benefits from strengths in operational implementation of adaptations and feedback survey results, without relying heavily on an institutional framework, which enables flexible adjustment and facilitates navigating along the identified needs of students and stakeholders.

By the end of every semester, the instructors review the contents of their respective courses in collaboration with the college's leadership. If any changes are deemed appropriate – which is the case on a regular basis due to the rapidly evolving media and communications environment – they are implemented, and the documentation is updated. Their approval or rejection then depends on the severity of the change: Small and inconsequential amendments are enacted in the instructor's and college's own responsibility; more significant ones are escalated to the university's leadership; and rather fundamental changes require the approval of the UAE Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), which was most recently involved in moving the programmes towards three majors from three specializations of one programme. This process is adequate in that it avoids unnecessary bureaucratic efforts and delays to minor updates, yet ensures that the programmes always remain compliant with the local legal framework and accreditation. The approach was confirmed on location multiple times, and examples were delivered to the expert panel.

For changes and amendments as described above, the three programmes draw on three main sources: First, the instructors keep up with their areas of specialisation and introduce new or improved elements to their courses. Second, the students put forward suggestions, most of which are based on their own, practical professional experience. Indeed, the majority of students study in order to improve their qualifications for their current and future jobs in mass communication. Third, the university is regularly in touch with current and prospective employers of their students. The combination of these three factors ensures that many courses – in particular the ones related to technological methods and working practices – always remain up to date and fully attuned to the demands of the labour market. That being said, there is a palpable risk that this rather practical orientation supersedes the scientific foundations of the respective courses and programmes (**see Finding 1**). It should also be noted that the available and recommended literature (at least as far as it was in

English) appeared to lag behind the development of the courses. However, the experts do not believe that this indicates a potential shortcoming of quality assurance when considering a review at programme level.

In addition, the college and the university consider evaluation surveys as well as observe students' potential difficulties completing the courses and earning average or above-average marks. The latest exit survey for graduates, reviewed by the board of experts, shows that students are generally satisfied with their experience at AFU, the vast majority 'agreeing' or 'strongly agreeing' with statements about the various quality control points, in particular the skills-oriented learning outcomes. They feel much better prepared for their professional roles and state that they have improved their ability to learn independently, communicate, work in a team, and critically to assess subject-specific issues.

Finally, the university collects and organises information around the three academic programmes, such as student statistics, demographic information, grades, survey results, etc., and also systematically collects suggestions and observations from the labour market (see above). As per the employers who were surveyed by the expert committee, AFU's graduates are on par or (in certain aspects) better than those of other universities offering mass communication programmes. The College also benchmarked the formal and quantitative requirements of its programmes against three public and private institutions in the UAE, in particular in terms of workloads for students as well as mandatory and elective courses. However, there is yet no benchmarking against other regional or international universities, nor a detailed comparison of course contents. Following this road in the future might even further heighten AFU's profile and internal motivation for continuous improvement (**see Finding 3**).

On a more global level, the panel carefully considered to what extent the discussed room for improvement in the curriculum could not have been detected by AFU's own quality assurance structures. Being a young university still undergoing growth and building its institutional framework – while the review focussed on its implementation on programme level –, the panel recognized that the members of the committee of trustees represent the crucial stakeholder groups of the university and also renowned academic expertise of the country. The academic institutional growth of AFU might benefit from strengthening the international scientific expertise of the committee of trustees by integrating international, ideally scientific, experts from abroad to support the scientific character of its programmes. However, this is seen as food for thought that goes beyond considering the operational implementation on programme level.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

- **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

The SER describes AFUs concept of “Active Learning” implementing group discussions, polls, formative assessments, forums and chats to practice a student-centred learning approach. Teaching methods in the three specializations include lectures, flipped classrooms, collaborative learnings, field trips, and case-based learning. Due to the impacts of the COVID 19 pandemic, AFU has also implemented a E-learning policy.

Student assessment is based on a semester principle and uses a letter grading system from A for a score of 90-100% to F for a score below 60%. Examination types include multiple choice, true/false, essays, matching, missing words, and drag and drop into images.

A Central Exams Committee (CEC) is responsible for the planning, scheduling, and conduct of final examinations as per Grading and Assessment Policy and the SER describes that in a regular semester, the final examination schedule will be announced by the Registrar 30 days prior to the final exam period.

Experts' Evaluation

The interviews with students, graduates, and teachers during the site visits support the teaching, learning, and assessment practices reported in the SER. Interviewed students confirmed that the faculty members use a variety of teaching methods in the classes including group discussions, case studies, problem-solving, independent learning by using YouTube and social media. The College uses policies to support equal opportunities for students in special circumstances, for students with special needs, or for students with specific social backgrounds.

Also, it was obvious from the recorded videos for different lectures that the college is trying to strengthen the autonomy of the learner, and student-teacher relations seem to be good. It is also positively recognized that professors invite experts from the society in order to show students the practical side and the various applications of the content of the curriculum they are studying. This clearly supports an interlacing of theoretical and practical aspects. Overall, the panel believes that student centredness is a strength of teaching at the College and the good relationship between professors and students supports the progression of learners during their course of study.

Responsibilities and structures related to the organisation of exams are clearly defined, assessment regulations and procedures are defined by the College, which is readily available in published form to students. Methods of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published. Also, grading scales and the distribution of grades are documented. Considering student assessment an area of improvement clearly can be seen in the reflection of academic and scientific competencies in course assessment, but particularly in the assessment of the final project. With currently a focus on applied skills - a more balanced assessment of theoretical, empirical (if so) *and* at the same time operative application is required. The College needs to assure that also academic learning outcomes on the course level are reflected as part of the examinations (**Finding 8**). At the same time, the experts believe that the college overall made the right decision to start conducting a final project instead of a final exam to measure the achievement of the intended level of qualification better. This approach only requires further development to also include the respective learning outcomes in a more balanced way.

Course instructors take responsibility for their individual exams and prepare the exams themselves; however, if there is more than one group for the same course, exams can be prepared and assessed by a team of instructors. The experts believe this is a good practice assuring comparability not only in achievement of outcomes, but also with regard to comparability of assessment. Feedback to students concerning the results of the assessments is provided.

Currently, failure rates in course exams are rather low, consequently students do not lose time when not passing an individual course. This fact also supports the good academic support that results from a good relationship between professors and students. Regulations are designed in a way that, when failing a course, repetition of exams is only possible in the next semester. On the long run, it might be wise to also update regulations in a way that re-sit options within one semester become possible **(Finding 9)**.

A further aspect to be considered by the College in order to increase its academic reputation and also increase the external compatibility of measurement of achievement particularly for the final project is the integration of external moderation for the graduation projects as benchmarking. Even further, this tool could be helpful when not only limited to the graduation project, but to some key courses that have highest relevance for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes **(Finding 10)**.

Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled.

8. A more balanced assessment of theoretical, empirical (if so) *and* at the same time operative application is required. The College needs to assure that also academic learning outcomes on the course level must be reflected as part of the examinations, particularly in the final project.
9. Re-sit options within the same semester should be considered.
10. The College should consider possibilities of integrating external moderation for the graduation projects and potentially even key courses of their curriculum.

- **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

Al Falah University states that admission requirements for the programmes cover national requirements following the Ministry of Education (MoE) or Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) track, or some more specific requirements for institutions besides regulations by MoE or ADEC. These requirements cover minimum grades in English and Arabic language competences.

AFU's structure focuses on student's progression, according to the SER, at an early stage. Students who are underperforming will receive advice and assistance. This process is marked to be an on-going process throughout the student-life cycle. The academic advising is said to be an on-going process and comprises information on the advising policy, the assignation of an academic advisor, and the constant observation of the improvement and results. The progression of students is carried out by curricula-based tests, said advising processes, and a formative assessment for all courses with an on-going feedback mechanism.

The SER also explains that students receive a degree, certificate, and transcript upon completion of the programme and samples are presented as annexes to the SER.

Experts' Evaluation

The general admission requirements and procedures are clearly described for each study programme. It regulates the access to studies at AFU and the admission to the study programmes. To apply to any programme at the COMC, a prospective student must comply with the general admission requirements, which are published on the university's website, where most of the ongoing students seek for further information. An application that does not meet the determined selection criteria will not be considered for admission. As the experts learned during interviews, all requirements can be adjusted as part of an ongoing development of the university's quality assurance.

Students can submit their application online on the university's website with a special application form in Arabic or English. The online application is followed by a paper version, as well as all the necessary supporting documents by the university's student's office before a defined deadline to start the semester. The student office handles applications, enrolment, payments beforehand and prepares diplomas for the students after finishing their studies. Previous degrees that are relevant for the application of the students can be recognized during the application process, however, being the first academic degree, the relevance of this process for the three programmes remains small.

Generally, students of the College also have the possibility to spend a semester abroad at another university. The students met by the experts during the site visit were able to clearly point out that they know this generally is an option, but that it is not yet an option for most of them. Nevertheless, the College explained its willingness to support all students that want to use this chance to be part of an international scientific student exchange programme. AFU and the student's office explained that they are ready to support these students with individual research of partner universities and previously arranged learning agreements to support student's mobility. On the long run, it might be wise to embed this general readiness in an institutional programme directed to support both incoming and outgoing mobility.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

- **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 teaching staff consist of five professors and one instructor as well as three academic staff members and a full-time secretary. The full staff list is part of the SER, and the staff employment policy is described as an annex to the SER explaining in detail the process of staff recruitment.

Reference in the SER is also made as well to the staff development policy and rules and regulations for staff recruitment.

Experts' Evaluation

From the expert's point of view, it has to be acknowledged that Al Falah is still a young university which benefits from high staff motivation and the spirit of creating the future, while not yet benefiting from an extensive academic support system at different levels. The Al Falah team presented itself competent and engaged, which is a clear strength of the College. Currently, with the defined student-teacher ratio, a high and stable quality level of support and teaching can be found. With the move towards implementing three majors, a growth in student numbers will be required to assure sustainability of the programmes, which will consequently also require a clear growth in the number of academic staff. While it can be positively confirmed that the involved teaching staff is qualified and competent to do so, it cannot be ignored that quantitatively, staff resources are at minimum level to cover the academic broadness required to cover all three programmes. Available staff is able to cover the currently required teaching hours, while it seems to the panel that, in practice, staff is quite intensively occupied with teaching duties, limiting the opportunities for research and other duties. Combined with the currently intense involvement of academic staff in student guidance and advice, on the long run this might not be very sustainable, particularly with an intended growth in student numbers. The College will have to implement measures to assure that teaching staff can also develop a research profile and not have to split up between teaching, administrative and student guidance (**Finding 11**). The current arrangement does not support the aspirations presented by the university leadership to develop Al Falah University towards a top 10 University in the region.

While at this time, the application of a clear staff development concept is not obvious, this can still be easily explained with the size of the College and the relatively young age of the university. Consequently, the university hires the staff required for its activities, which is appropriate for the current situation. However, the academic broadness of the three programmes, that by now are independent majors aspiring to an individual profile, creates a challenge to be academically well covered by staff. While all staff available is well qualified and a clear strength of the College, to fully cover the intended broadness of the curriculum of each programme, a quantitative increase in teaching staff is highly recommended. With the current number of professors, it is hardly possible to cover three disciplines in a way that allows the required depth to achieve the requirements resulting from the Qualifications Framework. Quantitative growth will not only allow to create more room for research activities but hiring additional staff with a focus on academic achievement will also facilitate to address curricular concerns raised above (**Finding 12**).

On the short run, attracting international experience through guest lecturers and visiting professors could be an interesting approach to increase capacity and at the same time add broadness to the academic portfolio of the College (**Finding 13**).

Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled.

11. **The college should assure appropriate staff resources to increase research activities.**
12. The required academic broadness of the curricula must be covered by appropriate academic staff resources.
13. The College should consider adding international guest lecturers and visiting professors to the staff portfolio.

- **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 information provided in the SER refers to the available facilities, rooms, computer labs and the library. A full library report was available as an annex for the expert panel for review. The availability of resources consequently was also an important element of the site visit, and reviewers visited the College on site to see classrooms, available computer labs, and also library resources.

To support students at the beginning of each semester, AFU conducts an orientation day for the new and current students, including a physical tour of the campus. A virtual tour is available as well, besides a technical orientation on how to use technical learning resources. Responsibility for these activities lies with the student affairs department.

Academic student support is provided by each faculty member, who has a defined number of students to guide and advise as part of an academic advisor programme. Faculty members are offering consultation hours (office hours) for students, and as part of the advising process, instructors should also invite especially students with poor academic performance and special needs to visit instructors frequently (face to face or virtually through MS Teams) during office hours.

Experts' Evaluation

The current campus and facilities of the College allow an efficient implementation of the curriculum and are also sufficient for the achievement of the defined learning outcomes. The expert panel walked through the premises and found that for the current number of students, resources are sufficient. Technical equipment allows the implementation of courses aiming at practical skills development. At the same time, the panel of experts supports the plans of the University to expand to a new campus as explained by the president of AFU. Hearing about the plans to also transfer the vision of Al Falah into architecture and design that expresses AFUs (research/teaching) attitude and position is especially encouraging for media related fields. This will also attract students and enable an open atmosphere of a 21st century university. Particularly if the campus is

conceptually viewed as the “second home” for the educational staff , as stated in the Faculty Handbook, a new campus will also increase attractiveness for staff.

Media equipment such as computers, cameras, microphones, lights, etc, are available to the students and acceptable for professional work, although (naturally) in limited numbers. Together with hardware, also software is a crucial topic for the students that can already use all Microsoft Office applications and Adobe CC for individual use in the university. If the university wants to continue to grow in the media area and accept more students on a very professional level, it must expand the media equipment in order to ensure learning success on the one hand, and to be able to keep up with competing universities on the other. Students in the panel discussion said they were producing a short film with the use of their own smartphones. This is not a general issue and also limited during the Corona restrictions but should be more and more implemented in the future to professionalize education that is focussed on the needs of the labour market in the Arab region. At the same time, the respective staff to support students from a technical view (e.g. how to use complex software in a lab) should also be considered. Altogether the workspaces meet the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

A strong point at AFU clearly results from the good student support that builds on friendly relationships between teaching staff and students. It became obvious to the panel of experts that students are well guided and supported in academic as well in non-academic questions. Support is offered by academic staff and – also possible due to the yet limited size of the programmes – builds on professional personal interaction at an individual level. This allows to address specific needs of students and assist them in overcoming obstacles. The panel believes that staff of the College does an excellent job supporting and guiding its students.

While the support provided to the students by their lecturers and the administrative staff is very good, there is a clear need to develop in the area of supplying students with literature, particularly field specific literature such as books and journals, also from English sources. While the panel is aware of Arabic as teaching language, available academic literature is not yet sufficient to provide a good support to the academic side of the Bachelor qualification. Improvement could be achieved in a physical way at the AFU library as part of the new building or in exchange with other universities to share capacities with each other. Even more digital access is of high relevance so that students can use and download resources if required (**Finding 14**).

Conclusion

The criterion is partly fulfilled.

14. The access to (international) literature must be significantly increased with a special focus on discipline-related publications (books and journals).

- **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 media office at AFU is responsible for producing and executing any publication available for public disclosure through the website. There are several handbooks available targeting different audiences: students as well as staff.

The website is explained to be an important source to provide information to stakeholders and includes admission requirements, the academic calendar as well as respective contact points and responsibilities as well as organizational charts. Furthermore, curriculum structure, credit hours and graduation requirements are displayed.

Experts' Evaluation

From the experts' panel's perspective, AFU's handbooks for students, faculty, and staff are exemplary and up to date. All three provide comprehensive and clear guidance for the respective target group. The same is true for the AFU Catalog. At least the student handbook and catalog should also be available through AFU's website (which is currently not the case in its English version). The website provides all necessary information for prospective students about admission and graduation criteria, as well as about student life at the university. Availability of information even doubles with the portal to electronic learning resources. Indeed, students confirmed to the expert panel that they felt well-informed and that all their remaining questions were answered satisfactorily by faculty and staff.

The course descriptions (syllabi) reviewed by the expert panel are generally good. However, not all are sufficient for an immediate and accurate assessment of the contents. This is primarily found because in some cases, the weekly course outline as well as the statement on resources is identical, even though course content differs considerably (see, for instance, "Social Networks" and "Writing for New Media"). Similarly, the description of the course learning outcomes is often formulaic and could benefit from more customisation. In some other cases, it does not come across entirely clearly what differentiates the given course from others, respectively what makes the subject so special that it merits a course of its own (e.g. "Electronic Journalism Editing" and "Electronic Journalism Publishing"). This renders it difficult for potential international stakeholders – foreign students and (visiting) faculty – to assess the unique value proposition of the programmes and courses, and to distinguish activities that cater primarily to the local environment from ones that apply at the regional or global level. The experts carefully discussed this issue during the site visit and conclude that this is not a problem of implementation and practice, but much more a challenge of transparent information and correct documentation. Consequently, the College – when reflecting on the scientific and academic representation in assessment and outcomes – should also assure that the course descriptions are fully consistent and reflect the true teaching content and outcomes in order to increase the required amount of transparency (**Finding 15**).

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

15. The College – when reflecting on the scientific and academic representation in assessment and outcomes – should clearly also assure that the course descriptions are fully consistent and reflect the true teaching content and outcomes in order to increase the required amount of transparency.

16. Recommendations of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends to accredit the study programme “New Media” with the degree “Bachelor in Mass Communication” offered by Al Falah University, Dubai with conditions.

The panel of experts recommends to accredit the study programme “Public Relations” with the degree “Bachelor in Mass Communication” offered by Al Falah University, Dubai with conditions.

The panel of experts recommends to accredit the study programme “Electronic Journalism” with the degree “Bachelor in Mass Communication” offered by Al Falah University, Dubai with conditions.

Findings:

1. The academic character of the programmes must be strengthened. This must be reflected in intended learning outcomes on the course level and on the programme level. In particular the graduation project must demonstrate the achievement of (academic) programme learning outcomes.
2. The college should assure that the programmes develop their Unique Scientific Position/ Unique Selling Position to enhance scientific visibility and also attract students (from abroad).
3. The character and the profile of each programme should be developed independently according to the specific requirements and include clear-cut discipline-related courses.
4. COMC should implement a more comprehensive and detailed benchmarking for the programmes that include (but are not limited to) comparison of aims, PILOS, learning sources, curriculum, academic programme structure, and assessment tools, and ensure to choose three universities that are from three levels; local, regional and international. Also, it is preferable to choose institutions similar to the University in a variety of aspects such as but not limited to the mission, size, programmes, disciplines, cultural similarity.
5. In the New Media programme the titles of the courses should be carefully reviewed to ensure they reflect the contents and intended learning outcomes.
6. In the new Media programme the use of international literature also in English language should be increased.
7. The E-Journalism programme should integrate topics of Digital Business Models and Media Production, e.g. as elective courses to enable graduates to work entrepreneurially.
8. Course descriptions should be complete and demonstrate a certain level of comparability with regards to level of detail.
9. A more balanced assessment of theoretical, empirical (if so) and at the same time operative application is required. The College needs to assure that also academic learning outcomes on the course level must be reflected as part of the examinations, particularly in the final project.
10. Re-sit options within the same semester should be considered.
11. The College should consider possibilities of integrating external moderation for the graduation projects and potentially even key courses of their curriculum.
12. The college should assure appropriate staff resources to increase research activities.
13. The required academic broadness of the curricula must be covered by appropriate academic staff resources.
14. The College should consider adding international guest lecturers and visiting professors to the staff portfolio.
15. The access to (international) literature must be significantly increased with a special focus discipline-related publications (Books and journals).
16. The College – when reflecting on the scientific and academic representation in assessment and outcomes – should clearly also assure that the course descriptions are fully consistent and reflect the true teaching content and outcomes in order to increase the required amount of transparency.