



AGENTUR FÜR
QUALITÄTSSICHERUNG DURCH
AKKREDITIERUNG VON
STUDIENGÄNGEN E.V.

FINAL REPORT

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES UNIVERSITY

MASS COMMUNICATON (BACHELOR OF ARTS)

May 2026



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DECISION OF THE AQAS STANDING COMMISSION ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME

▪ “MASS COMMUNICATION” (BACHELOR) OFFERED BY UAE 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 29th meeting on 18 May 2026, the AQAS Standing Commission decides:

1. The study programme “**Mass Communication**” (Bachelor) offered by **UAE 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 condition has to be fulfilled. The fulfilment of the condition has to be documented and reported to AQAS no later than **30 June 2027**. The confirmation of the condition 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 **30 June 2032**, provided that the condition listed below is fully met. Otherwise, the accreditation may be withdrawn.

Condition

1. UAEU must establish standardised and clearly documented mechanisms to collect and analyse feedback from stakeholders, in particular from alumni and labour market representatives, as well as clear mechanisms for linking the outcomes of this feedback to curriculum development processes.

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

1. To strengthen the scientific focus in the curriculum,
 - a. it is recommended to make the course STAT-101 (Statistics in a Modern World) compulsory for all Mass Communication students;
 - b. one additional quantitative research methods course should be introduced to the curriculum.
2. It is recommended that certain practical competences like “news editing” or “drafting of press releases” are additionally taught in Arabic.
3. The development of soft skills should be considered more strongly in the curriculum.
4. It is recommended to install an Advisory Board that includes representatives from (media) organisations offering internships to make the practicum organisation more reliable and transparent.
5. It is recommended to review and update the syllabi with regard to up-to-date literature as well as assessment format and its ECTS conversion system.

6. UAEU should establish processes to ensure that all information regarding programme development and delivery are comprehensively and systematically passed down to the colleges and departments.
7. It is recommended to reorganise current staff members' advising and progression support for students and the accompanying bureaucratic duties with regard to study organisation in order to ensure that the workload for the reaching staff remains at a feasible level.
8. It is strongly recommended establishing clearly documented procedures to ensure that all information on the website is comprehensive and up to date.

With regard to the reasons for this decision, the Standing Commission refers to the attached expert report.

EXPERT REPORT
ON THE STUDY PROGRAMME
 ▪ **“MASS COMMUNICATION” (BACHELOR)**
OFFERED BY UAE UNIVERSITY, AL AIN, UAE

Virtual visit to the university: 20-22 April 2026

Panel of experts

Prof. Dr. Marcel Machill	MPA (Harvard), Full Professor of Journalism and International Media Systems, University of Leipzig (Germany)
Prof. Dr. Nanette Aimée Besson	Professor of Corporate Communications, Media University of Applied Sciences Cologne (Germany)
Fatma Al Arimi	Communications Specialist, FAO Oman, Muscat (Oman) (labour market representative)
Lukas Hässner	Student Journalism, University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (student representative)
Coordinator Jana Newiger	AQAS, Cologne, Germany

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 study programme “**Mass Communication**” (Bachelor) offered by **UAE University**.

1. Criteria

Each 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 March 2025. The university produced a Self-Evaluation Report (SER). In June 2025, the institution handed in a draft of the SER together with the relevant documentation on the programme and an appendix. The appendix included e.g.:

- the CVs of the teaching staff
- course descriptions
- 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 8 September 2025. The final version of the SER was submitted in December 2025.

Nomination of the expert panel

The composition of the panel of experts follows the stakeholder principle. Consequently, representatives from the 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 2026. 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 virtual 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 virtual site visit at the university took place from 20-22 April 2026. The experts interviewed different stakeholders, e.g. representatives of the management of the higher education institution, the programme management, of teaching 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 virtual 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 18 May 2026. 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 2026, 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 based in Al Ain, UAE with more than 14,000 students currently enrolled. It was established in 1976 and is the oldest university in the United Arab Emirates. UAEU offers undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes across nine colleges: Business and Economics, Education, Engineering, Food and Agriculture, Humanities and Social Sciences, Information Technology, Law, Medicine and Health Sciences, Science. In addition to its Colleges, UAEU comprises nine research centres for several academic fields. The SER further outlines that UAEU's Science and Innovation Park works alongside business, industry, and public institutions to provide the UAE with research solutions. Students currently come from all seven Emirates and more than 60 other countries. UAEU uses rankings to benchmark with other universities in the region and beyond and implements a strategic plan which is revised and published every four years. In terms of internal organisation, the Vice Chancellor and his two Deputies are in charge of managing UAEU, including strategic planning, finances, and external relations and alumni. The provost oversees all academic matters such as undergraduate study programmes, academic personnel, the College of Graduate Studies, research centres, and consultation services. In addition, there are associate provosts for student affairs and research. As for the allocation of financial resources, they are distributed based on a combination of historical budget data, projected needs, and strategic priorities, as the SER states. To ensure that sufficient resources are available for each programme, the departments conduct periodic reviews of budget allocations throughout the academic year. Distribution criteria include enrolment numbers, strategic importance, and accreditation requirements.

The Mass Communication programme under review is hosted by Department of Media and Creative Industries (MACI) at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). CHSS was established in 1977, together with three other founding colleges. With more than 3,000 students currently enrolled and more than 140 faculty members, CHSS is stated to be the largest college of UAEU. The SER outlines that the College underwent a restructuring process in 2019 to be more competitive domestically as well as abroad, improve its functionality, and increase its accreditation potential. As a result, CHSS now consists of eight departments: Arabic Language and Literature, Cognitive Sciences, Geography and Urban Sustainability, Government and Society, Languages and Literature, Media and Creative Industries, Social Wellbeing, and Tourism and Heritage Studies. The SER outlines that the Dean is the Chief Academic, Financial, and Administrative Officer of the College. He is supported by a Vice Dean and two Assistant Deans for Research and Graduate Studies and for Student Affairs.

The Department of Media and Creative Industries (MACI) offers two undergraduate programmes, one in Mass Communication and another one in Visual Studies and Creative Industries. The Department has recently launched a new Master of Arts in Communication programme to further expand its educational portfolio. MACI currently consists of 12 faculty members and 8 instructors. Three additional faculty members joined in 2025.

IV. Assessment of the study programme

1. Quality of the curriculum

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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 bachelor's programme in Mass Communication at UAEU is a full-time 120-credit hour programme with a regular study period of 8 semesters. The SER outlines that the curriculum underwent restructuring based on the Commission for Academic Accreditation's (CAA) to redistribute minor credit hours. The restructuring process was further informed by the SWOT analysis conducted by UAEU from May to December 2023 as well as by benchmarking with both universities in the UAE and abroad (USA, UK, NZ). The revised curriculum has been implemented since July 2024. Besides several mechanisms and additions to the quality assurance of the programme, such as updated and detailed documentation, the new curriculum includes increased major credit hours from 48 to 75, nine additional courses to enhance practical skills and address new developments of the field, as well as more electives to choose from.

The new curriculum includes three concentrations: (1) Journalism, (2) Television Broadcasting, and (3) Public Relations and Advertising. While students who enrolled from the fall semester 2024 onwards no longer take a minor, students who enrolled before that are permitted to complete their previously chosen minors. The programme aims to prepare students for the labour market as well as for postgraduate studies in the field of mass communication. Against this background, the programme's four key goals are:

1. Develop the required skills to foster effective scientific enquiry in the field of mass communication and an understanding of the scientific foundation of mass communication.
2. Develop a comprehensive evidence-based framework in understanding the new emerging media environment including new trends in content production and dissemination across the broad areas of mass communication.
3. Develop a solid foundation in a range of key skills for mass communication research.
4. Become aware of the range of applications of mass communication across various professions associated with mass communication.

The SER identifies the following seven programme-level Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that are said to be aligned with the aforementioned goals as well as UAEU's institutional ILOs and UAE's National Qualification Framework (NQF):

1. Apply professional writing requirements for print, broadcast, public relations, and online media. Students will also develop competence in the production and operation of convergent media.
2. Demonstrate critical thinking abilities as applied to academic as well as professional arenas.
3. Acquire independent learning experiences by drawing on a rich and broadly based liberal arts education through research and analysis of social issues and prescribing appropriate solutions to problems.
4. Discuss the principles of professional and mass communication ethics and how they inform the work of the media professional in the Arab and Islamic contexts.
5. Explain the importance of diverse perspectives in solving societal problems.
6. Develop organisational, teamwork, and leadership skills.
7. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms with various audiences.

To achieve these programme-level ILOs, the curriculum comprises the following components:

Components	Number of courses	Total credit hours
General Education Requirements	11	21
Major Mass Communication Courses	21	75
Free Electives	4	12
College Requirements	2	6
Internship	1	6

Total	39	120
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According to the SER, the programme implements curriculum mapping to ensure that courses are purposefully structured and logically sequenced so that students can build on what they have previously learned and are progressively prepared for more challenging, higher-level work. Students are also involved in joint research projects with faculty members as well as project courses such as the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE Plus).

All necessary information on the study programme, including the new curriculum, programme structure, course descriptions, and degree requirements are public and can be accessed on the programme website. The student handbook and a separate internship handbook are available for enrolled students.

Expert evaluation

The curriculum is well-structured and generally comprehensive, with a good course sequence to provide students with foundational skills early in the programme followed by opportunities for development and mastery of content. Also, the three concentration areas (Journalism, PR and Advertising, TV Broadcasting) provide a clearly structured opportunity to specialise. The curriculum is practically oriented, and this is a very good approach to meet labour market requirements. The ILOs on both course and programme level are mapped and match with the defined graduate profile. Overall, the experts thus assess that the curriculum complies with level 6 of the EQF for bachelor's programmes.

It is highly appreciated that the need for courses addressing the characteristics of scientific reasoning and the requirements for scientific inquiry and literacy has been recognised by the University. In order to strengthen this aspect even further in the curriculum, it is recommended to make the course STAT-101 (Statistics in a Modern World) compulsory for all Mass Communication students as it is currently only offered as an elective (**Finding 1a**). In addition, one additional quantitative research methods course should be introduced to the curriculum (**Finding 1b**). This is not only essential for ensuring academic excellence, but it is also crucial for educating future journalists, PR experts, and media professional who are able to critically evaluate studies/reports/statistics that they receive within their professional environment. Also, since the university wants to develop into a more research-oriented university, a clear commitment to teaching qualitative and quantitative research methods also in the bachelor's curriculum is a prerequisite for that strategy.

The expert panel finds it highly commendable that the entire programme is taught in English. However, it is recommended that certain practical competences like "news editing" or "drafting of press releases" are additionally taught in Arabic (**Finding 2**). This would improve the students' skills on the regional labour market – which besides international media and companies is an important factor for careers. A further area with high importance for the labour market is soft skills which some labour market representatives said were sometimes slightly underrepresented in students. The development of soft skills should therefore be considered more strongly in the curriculum (**Finding 3**), either within a specialised course or by putting more emphasis on this aspect within existing courses.

The course MSC 490 (Practicum) is a good opportunity for students to acquire practical experience at external media outlets. In the documentation, it remains unclear whether the university has (formalised) cooperation contracts with external media outlets – and the procedure how students are attributed to media outlets is not made transparent either. It is therefore recommended to install an Advisory Board that includes representatives from those (media) organisations offering internships to make the practicum organisation more reliable and transparent (**Finding 4**). At the same time, it is a strength that students who are unable to get an internship at an external media outlet have the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of this course within the university.

With regard to syllabi and literature used within the courses, there is a variety of recent literature on the one hand and rather old pieces of literature on the other. For example, the course MSC-370 (Communication Theories) uses up-to-date literature from 2023. That is a very good example. The course MSC-266 (Media Economics) uses one of the most recognised textbooks from Alan Albarran (2017). However, it might be a good idea to add some more recent literature reflecting recent developments (“platform economy”). And a last example, the course MSC-200 (Introduction to Mass Media) is an introductory course. Therefore, it is acceptable that “classical” textbooks are used. However, since almost all textbooks have been written in 2002 or 2003, more recent literature would be useful for this course. Against this background, it is recommended to review and update the syllabi and, where necessary, add some more recent literature to them, including clear requirements for the required readings for each course week (**Finding 5**).

As for curriculum development, the experts learned during the discussion rounds that feedback is only collected irregularly and mostly informally from labour market representatives and alumni. Documentation on this is incomplete so far. This can prevent the meaningful inclusion of this feedback in the curriculum development process, including the evaluation of the appropriateness of the ILOs according to industry representatives. Against this background, formalised and regular evaluations with closed feedback loops must be conducted for external stakeholders to ensure any collected feedback is analysed and implemented effectively (see **Finding 6** & chapter 2).

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

2. Procedures for quality assurance

Bachelor’s/Master’s degree

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

According to the SER, QA policies and procedures at UAEU are based on institutional and federal guidelines and criteria. These policies and procedures are said to be in line with UAE’s National Qualifications Authority (NQA) as well as the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), and include college-level curriculum review, domestic and international benchmarking, and course- and programme-level evaluation. UAE’s Academic Quality Assurance Section and Institutional Research Section, which are part of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE), oversee all QA procedures at UAEU and report directly to the Vice Chancellor.

As for curriculum review and development, the SER outlines that all study programmes are subject to an annual review based on the following four performance profiles: (1) Faculty, (2) Research Productivity, (3) Program Viability, and (4) Course Offering. A set of performance indicators is used to measure the performance in each profile. The performance indicators data are said to be collected throughout the academic year, and the aggregated results are published at the end of each academic year. Department chairs review the

results and subsequently develop a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) that includes remedial actions for each performance profile and must be carried out within two years. In addition, a campus-wide Learning Outcomes Management System (LOAMS) is in place to provide administrators with information on the assessment processes. The assessment management system is reportedly populated regularly with the latest information extracted from the Learning Management System (Blackboard), the Curriculum Management System (CurriCUNET), and the Student Information System (SIS). Lecturers are required to collect and upload the assessment data to LOAMS.

The Mass Communication programme follows UAEU's regular programme review process which is outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual based on UAEU's Periodic Programme Review (PPR) process. The Accreditation and Assessment Committee has recently been established at MACI to oversee all programme-level QA procedures. The primary quality assurance system implemented is a structured programme review conducted every semester. This process is said to involve all faculty members and includes (1) a review of course-level ILO attainment for each course offered during the semester, (2) an analysis of teaching evaluations from the previous semester, and (3) structured faculty discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instruction for continuous improvement. The SER further states that all programmes maintain e-Portfolios that include the course syllabus, teaching materials, assessment instruments, model answers, quantitative analysis of student performance, graded samples, instructor review report, and student feedback. Course and lecturer evaluation forms are distributed to all at the end of each semester.

To ensure alignment with the labour market, the department reportedly has a feedback system in place that includes surveys for three key stakeholder groups: recent graduates, internship providers, and employers. The graduate surveys assess aspects such as programme quality, preparedness for employment, and alignment of academic training and job requirements. Results are said to be analysed annually to track long-term program effectiveness and graduate satisfaction. Internship providers are surveyed at the end of each academic year to evaluate the professional competencies, communication skills, and workplace readiness of student interns while employers, especially those who have hired graduates of the programme, are surveyed to evaluate employee performance, industry relevance of the curriculum, and emerging skills demands.

Expert evaluation

UAEU's QA mechanisms defined on the central level are generally comprehensive. The senior management has established both the Office of Institutional Effectiveness that oversees all QA processes as well as general key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor external rankings as part of its evaluation efforts. They work with a clearly structured dashboard to oversee these processes.

During the discussions with several stakeholders, the experts learned that QA procedures were supposed to have been updated with more documentation since July 2024. However, as of yet this has not cascaded down to the college and department level. The teaching staff of the Mass Communication programme reported that there is still potential for improvement when it comes to the efficient implementation of QA processes. The teaching staff thus mostly operates without a formalised QA system, relying largely on informal and ad hoc feedback mechanisms. While periodic meetings between lecturers and students provide opportunities for exchange, they lack standardisation and consistency. In addition, while the senior management indicated that parents are involved in feedback processes, this was not confirmed by the teaching staff, who generally do not perceive such involvement as relevant.

The experts further reviewed several questionnaires in English and Arabic, an employee survey result document in Arabic, and one survey from the department of Nutrition and Health which led to some confusion as the latter was not related to the Mass Communication programme. However, students did report that they feel

heard and considered in their wishes. Besides filling out mandatory and anonymous course satisfaction surveys at the end of each semester, they can approach the teaching staff at any time with feedback and complaints. This perspective is echoed by industry representatives, despite reporting varying experiences regarding the extent to which their input is considered.

As for the effectiveness of any implemented QA mechanisms, the current QA framework could not provide any insights on specific issues. There is limited evidence that feedback from previous accreditation processes – such as labour market input collected two years ago – has been systematically utilised to drive improvements. In addition, only questionnaire forms were provided for review by the experts panel, without samples of actually conducted surveys and their results, especially qualitative answers which would give direct advice for changes.

Overall, the absence of certain standardised procedures across various operational areas became evident during the review. Against this background, UAEU must establish standardised and clearly documented mechanisms to collect and analyse feedback from stakeholders, in particular from alumni and labour market representatives, as well as clear mechanisms for linking the outcomes of this feedback to curriculum development processes (**Finding 6**).

In addition, the communication between the senior management and the college and departments did not seem to be efficient. For example, there was confusion about who is responsible for updating certain websites, assessment practices, and class organisation. With regard to the latter, it was reported by the senior management that mixed classes are already being implemented across the university for quite some time now while the teaching staff of the Mass Communication programme was under the assumption that this is not the practice at UAEU yet. Against this background, UAEU should establish processes to ensure that all information regarding programme development and delivery are comprehensively and systematically passed down to the colleges and departments (**Finding 7**).

Conclusion

The criterion is partially fulfilled.

3. Learning, teaching and assessment of students

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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

As for learning and teaching methods, the SER states that a variety of teaching methods is implemented in the programme. This includes lectures, laboratories, individual and group assignments, as well as e-learning to help students achieve programme- and course-level ILOs. Faculty members are said to deliver theoretical knowledge in lectures, while instructors elaborate on the applications in laboratory sessions. Lectures are typically delivered as PowerPoint presentations. The SER further states that students participate in hands-on exercises to apply the theoretical knowledge they learn in lectures. Students are also given a variety of individual and group assignments, such as tutorials, course projects, film shooting, still photography, magazine production, essays, and topic discussions to help students develop their practical and writing skills as well as critical thinking. To enhance instructional materials and actively involve students in the learning process,

lecturers use e-learning platforms such as the Blackboard LMS as well as smart boards, multimedia and other internet resources. These are said to be supplemented by software, applications, and hardware that are specific to media courses (e.g., Sony XD Cam & FX; Canon 800D; Adobe Creative Cloud: Photoshop, Lightroom, Premiere Pro; Datawrapper) and several AI tools and applications (e.g., Gamma, Napkin, Gemini (Deep Research), Flash 2.5, Notebook LM).

Lecturers reportedly support students in their learning with theoretical and practical projects that require independent studies. About 30% of the courses are said to have lab/practical components either implemented in a dedicated laboratory or embedded in the lecture via hands-on activities to ensure a proper balance between theoretical foundation and practical application. To cater to the needs of a diverse student body, UAEU has started to integrate more online and blended learning opportunities in the Mass Communication programme over the past years.

As for assessments, the SER outlines that a variety of assessment methods is implemented to ensure that students meet the specified ILOs of the respective courses. This includes midterm and final exams, quizzes, projects, extended papers, and in-class presentations depending on the ILOs and type of course. All course syllabi reportedly include assessment sections to ensure that assessment tools are valid and aligned with course-level ILOs. The published examination regulations include information on schedules, specifications and requirements, and grading for each exam type, as stated in the SER. In terms of appeals and complaints, if possible, they are to be solved on an individual basis. Otherwise, students can make a formal request to the department chair to have their grade reconsidered. Such requests are forwarded to the Student Cases Committee which deals with complaints regarding grades and similar issues. If the issue still can't be resolved at that level, it is referred to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, as outlined in the SER.

Expert evaluation

The programme clearly balances academic grounding with practical learning, essential for a rapidly changing field like mass communication. The programme's practical orientation is a strong asset. Students gain exposure to professional settings through workshops, training, field visits, and internships. Teaching goes beyond lectures to include laboratories, production assignments, presentations, projects, field exposure, and digital and AI-supported tools. The implemented teaching and learning methods match the content of the respective courses and support the achievement of the ILOs both on course and programme level. While the currently implemented methods are already diverse, it might be beneficial to continue strengthening oral communication, interviewing, critical questioning, news judgement, Arabic professional writing, and engagement with current affairs in the programme, as these are core skills employers expect.

Assessment mechanisms, grading criteria, and course requirements are provided to students at the semester's start through the syllabi. Although written descriptions suggest a strong reliance on written exams, meetings with staff and students showed that teaching staff are flexible in using applied, practice-based assessments, especially in response to student feedback and the nature of media courses. This flexibility is positive because it allows assessment to better reflect labour market skills. However, the assessment methods are not always correctly indicated in the syllabi due to this flexibility. The syllabi should therefore be reviewed and updated to better reflect the balance between written and practical assessments, especially in practice-oriented courses (see **Finding 5**).

Assessment regulations, exam and semester schedules, appeals procedures and support mechanisms are defined and accessible to students, including special support options for handicapped students.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

4. Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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

[ESG 1.4]

Description

As for admission, the SER outlines that admission to UAEU is based on the annually issued admission policy which sets forth the specific admission criteria for (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 respectively. The Associate Provost for Students Affairs is said to supervise all activities related to student enrolment and registration. As for admission requirements, the Mass Communication bachelor's programme accepts students with a minimum IELTS (or equivalent) exam score of 6.0 and a GPA of 3.3.

The admission criteria and regulations are said to be included in the Undergraduate Student Handbook, which is publicly available on the website, according to the SER.

According to the SER, admissions to the programme show an increased student intake over the past two years which is expected to continue.

As for student progression, this is overseen by the advising unit and the undergraduate studies office at the college level. At the start of their studies, each student is assigned an academic advisor who monitors their progress and ensures that they take the appropriate number of courses each semester. This is carried out through the web-based tool Degree Works that tracks degree requirements. This is supposed to allow both students and faculty to track the courses each student has completed and see the course requirements that remain. In consultation with their faculty advisor, students create a study plan for each semester. This plan must reportedly be checked and approved by the advisor to enable registration for the selected courses.

In terms of certification, the SER outlines that documentation after graduation is carried out at university level where documents and graduation certificates are also archived. In addition, UAEU 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 necessary.

Expert evaluation

Admission is generally clear and regulated at the university level. Requirements are predefined, published, and appropriate for the programme, including the English-language requirement given the programme's bilingual and professional nature.

Student progression is adequately supported through academic advising, approved semester study plans, and the Degree Works platform, which lets students and advisors monitor completed and remaining requirements. This gives students a clear pathway through the programme. However, meetings showed that advising loads are heavy, with advisors responsible for many students. For a programme of this size and practical nature, additional dedicated advising or progression support would strengthen the system and let academic staff focus more on teaching, mentoring, and industry engagement (see **Finding 8**).

Recognition of credits from other institutions is possible and handled on a case-by-case basis. It was indicated during the discussion rounds that ECTS and credit-hour information were added to course descriptions to support transparency and mobility. However, this information was not included in the documents the experts

had access to. The syllabi should therefore be reviewed and updated to include comprehensive information on the conversion system of local credits to ECTS (see **Finding 5**). Clearer documentation would strengthen student mobility and make recognition procedures more predictable for incoming and outgoing students.

As for certification, students receive an official transcript upon completion of their studies which outlines all crucial information on the obtained qualification, including degree, graduate date, major, minor, concentration, and all completed courses including grades and credits. The experts assess that this certification is adequate for students to apply for jobs or pursue graduate programmes both in the national and the international context.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

5. Teaching staff

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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

According to the SER, the bachelor's programme in Mass Communication is served by 11 faculty members (one professor, 10 associate professors) and four instructors, with another three members expected to join in the spring semester of 2026. The faculty contributing to the programme come from several countries such as the USA, India, UK, UAE, Jordan, Sweden, and New Zealand.

As for teaching staff recruitment, UAEU reportedly has procedures in place to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and selection process. Selection criteria and required qualifications are based on the academic position that is to be filled. The recruitment process, selection criteria, and employment conditions are outlined in UAEU's Academic Personnel Policies Manual and in the Employee Handbook.

As for teaching staff development, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) reportedly offers opportunities to develop and enhance teaching performance. A particular focus of the Centre is the promotion of emerging digital technologies. CETL comprises an Instructional Design Unit, a Teaching, Scholarship and Assessment Unit, a Faculty Professional Development Unit, and a PhD Students Teaching Academy. The National Faculty Support Programme (NFSP) provides an opportunity for national faculty members to enhance their professional development by attending conferences, workshops, and training courses. In addition, teaching staff receive support to advance their research. This includes financial support to attend one international conference per year. More conferences can be attended if third-party funding is available.

The performance of the teaching staff is said to be subject to regular evaluation. The faculty performance review covers all areas of a faculty member's activities (research, teaching, and service) and is facilitated via an online system. The SER further states that the outcome of the performance review informs the faculty promotion system, which evaluate the professional development of faculty members and their achievements in teaching, scholarship, and service. The promotion process also reportedly requires external review of research. In addition, all faculty must include proof of teaching effectiveness as part of their portfolio for promotion as well as for contract renewal.

Expert evaluation

The university has provided a full list of all teaching staff involved in the programme, including their academic qualification, their research and other relevant qualifications, the number of teaching hours, and the duration of employment. The teaching staff is highly qualified with regards to the intended learning outcomes of the programme: Instructors and Professors have earned their PhD at highly recognised universities, their publication lists are relevant, up-to-date, and include high-ranking peer-reviewed journals. It should also be underlined that the composition of the teaching staff is international.

Furthermore, there is a good mix of academically qualified staff and staff with relevant experience in the media sector.

Instructors and Professors are highly committed in research, teaching, and supervising students. However, the experts learned during the discussion rounds that their workload in connection with the supervision of students is very high as each lecturer has about 50 students to supervise. It is therefore recommended to externalise bureaucratic workload related to student affairs to ensure that the workload for the teaching staff remains at a feasible level (**Finding 8**). Specialised staff serving as “supervisors” or “mentors” and closely following the bureaucratic affairs (e.g. attribution of students to particular courses, “un-locking” of courses within the IT system if a student wants to change the composition of their courses) would take workload away from lecturers and enable them to spend even more time on research.

The university offers an exemplary system of internal grants for research projects and for attending academic conferences. Professors are encouraged to attend conferences – which is a particular strength. The internal selection process for research grants is transparent and competitive (with sufficient resources). All this proves an excellent concept for staff development.

The number of teaching staff and its range of expertise is appropriate for the student body. For the near future, it might be beneficial to hire additional academic staff on the level of assistant and associate professors who bring in additional expertise in the field of artificial intelligence. Recruitment strategies implemented at UAEU follow transparent procedures and are clearly documented.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

6. Learning resources and student support

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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

As for facilities, UAEU comprises lecture rooms, labs, and studios. As the programme is not gender-mixed, female and male students have access to mirroring classrooms. The Media, TV Production and Broadcast Lab can reportedly be accessed by both female and male students, under supervision and following a booking schedule. The Lab is also used for student projects, interviews, news delivery, which are uploaded to a YouTube channel, and podcasts. There is a designated Media technician available to supervise the Lab and help students with their projects. In addition, the SER states that Media and Newspaper Labs equipped with

Mac PCs and Photoshop/Photography Labs as well as a shared Editing Lab for Inkjet printing and other printing purposes are available for the programme. All classrooms are said to be equipped with state-of-the-art technology, including desktops, laptops, interactive smart boards, and AV systems. UAEU's IT Support Services are supposed to facilitate teaching, learning and research. Live assistance can be requested via the IT Help Desk.

UAEU further provides spaces in several buildings and the main library to display student projects. These centrally located venues can be booked via a pre-booking system and are equipped with display infrastructure.

UAEU's Media Cloud 5 Studio is said to offer students a platform to explore creative expression through media-related activities. It organises interactive workshops, guest speaker sessions, and media production events and connects students with professionals.

The main library is also accessible online. It comprises print Reference and General Collections, Special Collections and, soon an Art Exhibition Centre. Electronic tools and databases are available both on and off campus, with user support via LibChat and EZY Proxy. If an item is not available in the UAEU collection, faculty and students can request it via the online document delivery service. Small lecture rooms are said to be available for research groups, guest lectures, and private meetings. All rooms are fitted with advanced audio-visual equipment and have a capacity of 25-40. They can be booked via the local booking system.

UAEU reportedly offers a variety of student services, including Student Health & Wellness Services and Student Customer Services. Services aimed specifically at enhancing employment skills include those offered by the Centre for Career Placement & Alumni (CCPA). This unit is supposed to help students prepare for a career by providing them with opportunities for career readiness, employability skills, and internships through the JAHIZ programme. It also connects students and graduates with employers to provide job opportunities.

UAEU's Learning Resources Centres, such as the Tutorial Centre, the Reading Centre, the Writing Centre, the Technology Centre, and the Speaking Centre, are said to offer personalised support, training opportunities, and workshops in the respective areas to address the needs of the diverse student body. In addition, UAEU provides assistance and services for students with special needs and international students. According to the SER, the University also offers counselling and financial aid.

Upon enrolment, each student is reportedly assigned a faculty member as academic advisor to oversee academic progression. Student appeals are reviewed and decided by the Student Academic Grievances and Appeals Committee (SAGAC). The Committee's work is said to be conducted in a way that ensures confidentiality as defined in the University Policies.

UAEU uses the e-learning platform Blackboard to check student work for plagiarism.

Expert evaluation

The facilities that are available for the study programme are excellently maintained, up to date, and fully support teaching and learning activities. A range of specialised rooms with comprehensive equipment is available, including media, TV production and broadcast labs, as well as editing and photography labs. These tools and facilities are actively integrated into teaching and enable students to develop practical skills. It is further commendable that a clearly structured and effective equipment loan system is in place which is well known among students. During the discussions, it was repeatedly emphasised that the available technical equipment is regularly used and meets professional standards. Students also highlighted that they can work with relevant equipment at an early stage of their studies. The laboratories are supported by technical staff who assist students with their projects. This ensures that the infrastructure is effectively used in everyday study activities.

The library is accessible both on campus and remotely and provides access to relevant databases and academic literature. In addition, several learning centres (e.g. Writing Centre, Speaking Centre, Tutorial Centre) are available to support the development of academic skills. These services are complemented by IT support and e-learning structures, enabling flexible study conditions.

The experts learned during the virtual site visit that student support services are broad in scope and are overseen by the Dean of Student Affairs. An orientation week at the beginning of each semester provides initial guidance for new students. Throughout each semester, students are additionally supported by an academic advisor (one of the lecturers of the programme) who closely monitors their study progression. During the discussions, it became evident that this system generally functions well, although the students-advisor ratio is sometimes relatively high. In addition, central support services such as Career Services assist students with their transition to the labour market. These services also include programmes aimed at enhancing employability as well as support with organising internships.

As for non-academic support, students have access to (free) accommodation on campus and transportation as well as several scholarship opportunities. Furthermore, specific support structures and counselling services are in place for international students and students with special needs.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

7. Information

Bachelor's/Master's degree

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

UAEU distributes information on their study programmes predominantly via its website in both Arabic and English. Besides the main website which provides information on libraries, admission and other services, the programme websites include all relevant information on the programme, e.g., the programme outline, a model study plan, ILOs, and course descriptions.

Regulations and policies for both students and staff are available as handbooks and manuals (e.g., student handbook, internship handbook, Academic Personnel Policies Manual, employee handbook).

Expert evaluation

The university has established an Outreach department responsible for external communication, which also serves as an internship platform for Mass Communication students. Current communication efforts are primarily one-directional, focusing on disseminating information from the university to the public. There is thus potential to strengthen engagement with key stakeholders – particularly the international labour market – through more structured, two-way communication processes. This could also lead to offering internships in English speaking companies in the long run which would be an additional benefit for students of the programme.

The university's website is well set up, but some study programme information is outdated (e.g. on the currently implemented curriculum) and module descriptions in English are notably brief. In the discussion rounds, the

experts learned that the responsibility for maintaining and updating content rests with the department. This process lacks clarity and consistency. Enhancing these procedures would improve both transparency and the institution's external international image. The expert panel therefore strongly recommends establishing clearly documented procedures to ensure that all information on the website is comprehensive and up to date (**Finding 9**).

International visibility of the programme is supported through student exchanges during summer periods and participation in academic conferences. In addition, social media channels, including Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, are actively managed by the Outreach department. International students report using platforms such as Instagram and Facebook as key sources of information when researching the university. While these efforts are commendable, the expert panel believes that it might be beneficial to promote the programme's defined unique selling points (USPs) more strongly in internal and external communications to expand both its domestic and international visibility.

Conclusion

The criterion is fulfilled.

V. Recommendation of the panel of experts

The panel of experts recommends accrediting the study programme “Mass Communication” (Bachelor) offered by UAE University with conditions.

Commendation

The Mass Communication programme offered by the CHSS at UAEU displays a clear commitment to academic excellence. The curriculum is comprehensive and well structured, preparing students for successful careers in the Mass Communication field. The teaching staff of the programme is excellently qualified, has great international experience, and is highly motivated and engaged with students of the programme. Students are very satisfied with the open atmosphere both on campus and in the programme. Learning, teaching, and assessment methods are diverse, student centred, and fit to achieve the ILOs on course and programme level. UAEU's state-of-the-art information system further supports student progression. Available facilities and resources, including specialised equipment and labs for the Mass Communication field, are outstanding. Comprehensive academic as well as non-academic support services are available for the entire student body, including students with special needs.

Findings

1. To strengthen the scientific focus in the curriculum,
 - a. it is recommended to make the course STAT-101 (Statistics in a Modern World) compulsory for all Mass Communication students.
 - b. one additional quantitative research methods course should be introduced to the curriculum.
2. It is recommended that certain practical competences like “news editing” or “drafting of press releases” are additionally taught in Arabic.
3. The development of soft skills should be considered more strongly in the curriculum.
4. It is recommended to install an Advisory Board that includes representatives from (media) organisations offering internships to make the practicum organisation more reliable and transparent.
5. It is recommended to review and update the syllabi with regard to up-to-date literature as well as assessment format and its ECTS information.
6. UAEU must establish standardised and clearly documented mechanisms to collect and analyse feedback from stakeholders, in particular from alumni and labour market representatives, as well as clear mechanisms for linking the outcomes of this feedback to curriculum development processes.
7. UAEU should establish processes to ensure that all information regarding programme development and delivery are comprehensively and systematically passed down to the colleges and departments.
8. It is recommended to externalise bureaucratic workload related to student affairs to ensure that the workload for the teaching staff remains at a feasible level.
9. The expert panel strongly recommends establishing clearly documented procedures to ensure that all information on the website is comprehensive and up to date.