# BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

# INTERIM INSPECTION
# (Independent Higher Education)

**INSTITUTION:**        Royal International University

**ADDRESS:**        Royal Academy
4–4, 11th Khoroo
Sükhbaatar District
Ulaanbaatar
Mongolia

**HEAD OF INSTITUTION:**        Professor Jambal Tsetsegmaa

**ACCREDITATION STATUS:**        Accredited

**DATE OF INSPECTION:**        1–2 November 2021

**ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:**        Continued accreditation, 27 January 2022

## PART A – INTRODUCTION

### 1.    Background to the institution

The Royal International University (RIU/the Institution) was founded in 2010 as the Mongolian Royal Academy and is based in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. RIU holds degree-awarding powers conferred and quality assured by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sport of Mongolia.

RIU offers undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It offers the opportunity for its students to study in overseas countries such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), South Korea and Japan through agreements with international universities.

The mission of the Institution is to establish an institute that provides a world-class education through global networking that enables students from all backgrounds to become world-class business leaders.

RIU is a private limited company. The President of RIU is supported by three Vice-Presidents, who are responsible for academic affairs, and corporate strategy and development. The role of Vice-President for Academic Affairs incorporates the overall management of quality assurance. The President reports to the Chair of the Institution's Governing Body. There is an Academic Board that is responsible for all academic affairs of the Institution and that reports directly to the Chair of the Governing Body.

RIU was originally part of and grew out of the Ikh Zasag International University, which was established in 1994. Following its independent establishment in 2010, it concluded a partnership agreement in 2012 with Virginia International University in the USA, which enables Mongolian students to obtain internationally recognised degrees. RIU also has collaborative agreements with other international universities.

### 2.    Brief description of the current provision

The Institution offers four undergraduate degrees and two postgraduate degrees. The undergraduate degree in business administration is taught completely in English, and the international relations Bachelor's degree is mainly taught in Mongolian. Two other undergraduate degrees, in public administration and architecture, are completely taught in Mongolian. One Master's degree, in public administration, is fully taught in Mongolian, while the other postgraduate degree, in business administration, is fully taught in English. The Institution also has eight other undergraduate degrees approved but these are not yet running due to no enrolments having taken place. All RIU's degree courses are validated until 2022.

The Institution offers undergraduate degrees on the basis of two years of study in Mongolia, followed by two years of study in a foreign location. In addition, it offers a single year of study in Mongolia, followed by a single year of study in a foreign location for its postgraduate students in business administration and public administration. Delivery is through a combination of in-person and online teaching, in accordance with Ministry of Education requirements.

The maximum capacity of the Institution is 850 students. At the time of the inspection, there were 721 students enrolled, all on full-time courses, the majority being female. There are three students under the age of 18. All students are Mongolian nationals. The Institution does not have any foreign students at present.

The entry requirements are clearly set by the Mongolian Ministry of Education and the Institution follows these requirements. Enrolments take place at the beginning of the academic year in September.

### 3.    Inspection process

The inspection was carried out online over two half-days. Interviews were held with the President, three Vice-Presidents, the General Accountant, Director of Research, Quality Assurance Manager, Marketing Manager, Foreign Relations Manager and the Dean of Student Affairs. Interviews were also held with a representative

group of students and teaching staff. A lesson was observed and the premises were viewed by the inspector in a virtual tour. Documentation was scrutinised. All staff and students co-operated fully with the inspection.

**4.      Inspection history**

| Inspection type | Date |
| --- | --- |
| Full Accreditation | 3–4 September 2019 |

## PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

*The following judgements and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.*

### 1.    Significant changes since the last inspection

The Institution has appointed a Vice-President of Strategy and Development.

Teaching is now undertaken through a combination of in-person and online delivery in accordance with Ministry of Education regulations. Students are required to attend for five days of in-person tuition and then are taught remotely for the remaining five days in a two-week period.

### 2.    Response to action points in last report

*14.8 The Institution must put in place suitable arrangements to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.*

The Institution has introduced a comprehensive policy on preventing radicalisation and extremism. Staff have undertaken appropriate in-house training, including the appropriate action to take if they suspect or experience behaviour that can be considered a threat to students in relation to radicalisation and extremism. The Institution has also hosted sessions from the local police addressing issues relating to law and order. The Institution has also carried out an appropriate risk assessment and makes reference to this in its policy document.

*27.1 & 27.3 The Institution must develop centralised documentation that describes all the formal and informal quality procedures.*

The Institution has produced a comprehensive policy document that includes detailed guidance on its formal and informal quality assurance procedures. The policy document details staff responsibilities, monitoring processes, and internal and external activities to enhance quality, implementation strategies, audits and reviews. The documentation is appropriately detailed and enables all staff to identify their ongoing role in ensuring that the quality of delivery is maintained and enhanced. In addition, the documentation enables students to be reassured of the standard of their programmes by providing explicit guidance on the quality assurance mechanisms in place at the Institution.

The documentation would be enhanced, in terms of clarity, by the inclusion of a diagrammatic representation of the quality assurance system to provide a useful overview of the quality assurance process.

### 3.    Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

*It is recommended that the Institution establishes a major incident recovery plan and an audit committee to augment its internal reviews of financial probity and audits of procedures and systems.*

The Institution has established an internal audit committee that meets every semester to oversee the review of its financial procedures, systems and financial probity. The membership of the audit committee comprises representatives from the Governing Board, the President, the General Accountant and an external representative with financial expertise from another local university. The Institution's accounts are subject to independent external audit. This provides effective oversight of the Institution's financial probity, procedures and systems. A risk assessment has been carried out on the Institution's vulnerability to financial loss and includes actions to mitigate this.

*It is recommended that the arrangements with Wolverhampton University for receiving students onto the University's programmes are renewed formally.*

The Institution no longer collaborates with Wolverhampton University. It does have collaborative arrangements with other international institutions, which are subject to appropriate formal agreements.

*It is recommended that all documentation is reviewed systematically to ensure that it is appropriately localised to be relevant to the Institution.*

The procedures for documentation management have been developed. Appropriate procedures are in place to collect, store, manage, review and update all documents. This includes ensuring that the documentation is localised, making it appropriately referenced and relevant to RIU. This helps to avoid confusion and enables staff and students to better understand the policies and procedures in operation.

*In order to ensure that student records are up to date, it is recommended that the Institution collects contact details from its students at least on an annual basis.*

An effective, comprehensive procedure for the collection of student information and contact details has been implemented and developed from a paper-based to an electronic system. Such data is gathered on an annual basis and checked each semester. Students are able to provide direct updates to the system through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform. As a result, the information is up to date and accurate, enabling speedy contact to be made with students and their next of kin, should this be necessary.

*It is recommended that the use of plagiarism software be extended to undergraduate as well as postgraduate delivery and that the English language teaching material is uploaded on to the Electronic Data and Student Support System (EDSSS).*

The EDSSS has been replaced by a bespoke VLE platform that is more suitable for the Institution's purposes. Plagiarism software is in use in the Institution for undergraduate and postgraduate courses and students are able to access it prior to submission of their work. Staff training has taken place to devise assessments that, as far as possible, prevent cheating and plagiarism. The impact of this is that the Institution is better able to reassure itself on the authenticity of students' work.

*It is recommended that the Institution continues to ensure its moderation processes are sufficiently robust, enabling it to include in its policies and procedures that appeals against academic judgement will not be permitted.*

RIU applies robust internal and external moderation processes that are appropriate for a higher education institution. This ensures the integrity of the awards made and academic fairness to students. It has a clear and appropriate student complaints process, which encompasses an appeals procedure. The complaints process still does not include a reference to the fact that appeals against academic judgement will not be permitted in order to guard against frivolous or spurious appeals.

*It is recommended that medical evidence be provided to support student absence, especially where the absence relates to an assessment.*

Suitable medical evidence is collected to support all student absence.

### 4.     Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

### 4.1     Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

| **The standards are judged to be:** | ☒ Met | ☐ Partially Met | ☐ Not Met |

**Comments**

| The Institution has a clear organisational structure that is effectively communicated to all stakeholders. The Academic Board is the senior committee with decision-making authority on academic matters and is responsible for approving the curriculum. It takes account of feedback from students and lecturing staff in considering the overall academic performance of the Institution. RIU promotes academic freedom, and the Academic Board protects this principle by acting separately from the Institution's Governing Board. |

There are four strands to the overall institution strategy. These are clear and appropriate. The first strand is the inclusion of sustainability in the University's teaching and processes, in recognition of the desire to develop and enact policies and procedures that are environmentally friendly. The second is increasing the development of executive education and promotion of life-long learning. The third strand is the expansion of collaborative networks with international educational institutions. The fourth is helping the nation to re-skill its workforce to address the future needs of employers.

The Institution sets key indicators to measure the achievement of its strategic objectives and for planning its provision. The key indicators take account of employer and government feedback as well as feedback from students and staff. RUI reviews the quality of its students' experience, including through student surveys and reviews of teaching through lesson observations. The resulting information is effectively fed into and informs the quality assurance process.

The effect of this is to enable the Institution to maintain and enhance quality and expand student recruitment through the resulting enhancement of its reputation.

RIU's recognition of the future needs of employers directs it in identifying the skills and attributes it must incorporate in its educational provision to prepare its graduates for the demands that will be made of them in their future employment.

| 4.2 | General and Academic Management and Administration (spot check) |
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**The standards are judged to be:**  ☒ Met  ☐ Partially Met  ☐ Not Met

**Comments**

The Institution has appropriate policies and procedures for the recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced staff. There are clear and appropriate job specifications for all staff. Staff interviewed confirmed that they were very clear about what their job entails, in accordance with the specifications with which they are provided.

All staff are provided with a suitable induction pack. They provide a signature to acknowledge that they have received induction training. In questionnaires, staff are asked to provide feedback on their induction programme. Staff confirmed that the induction processes are appropriate and comprehensive. Inspection findings confirm this.

Staff are treated fairly and in accordance with the Institution's published equality and diversity policy. The policy is included in the induction programme and the staff handbook and referred to in the contract of employment. The Institution employs staff from various international cultures, which benefits students as they receive different cultural perspectives as part of their educational experience. RIU embraces the inclusion of different cultural viewpoints in its education provision.

Staff confirmed that they have access to a complaints and appeals process, and this was found to be appropriate. The process mirrors what is included in the complaints and appeals policy and staff are made aware of it during their induction. Policies are reviewed annually in accordance with the quality assurance procedures, which ensures that the policies remain up to date.

The Institution operates a comprehensive staff appraisal process for both teaching and non-teaching staff. The process includes classroom observations for teaching staff. Heads of department carry out classroom observations of all their academic staff on a rotational basis. The appraisal system for all staff is aligned with the person's job description and the goals of the Institution. Good practice is disseminated through departmental staff meetings. This enables the Institution to ensure that good performance is appropriately recognised, which motivates staff.

There are secure mechanisms to ensure the accuracy and fitness-for-purpose of internal and external information. All information published externally is approved by the Institution's President and it follows the overall marketing plan, which is established annually.

All the information that is intended to be published, whether internally or externally, is checked to ensure that it contributes to meet the objectives of the marketing plan. Such information is scrutinised by the quality assurance department for accuracy before it is signed off by the President.

4.3     Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**             ☒ Met       ☐ Partially Met     ☐ Not Met
**Comments**

The academic staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. The different approaches to delivery used by teaching staff provide diversity and stimulate students' interest in the modules. This is evidenced by the high student retention rates achieved by the Institution. In addition, RIU benefits from encouraging staff to undertake research that effectively feeds into their teaching.

Students are encouraged and enabled to develop independent learning skills. Each week, a day is set aside for students to undertake formal independent learning guided by activities set by teaching staff and linked to assessment strategies as appropriate. The outcome of these activities is discussed in class and individual constructive feedback is provided. Staff commented that this approach works well, and students confirmed that it builds their self-confidence in developing their independent learning skills. Inspection findings confirm this from both the student and staff perspective.

Students confirmed that they receive detailed and supportive spoken and written feedback on their assessments, performance and progress. They confirmed that their work is praised for its positive attributes and constructive suggestions are provided on how their work can be improved.

The feedback system enables staff to discuss strengths and weaknesses with students and give appropriate guidance. The feedback is monitored by senior departmental staff.

The internal and external quality assurance procedures do not include explicit reference to reviews of the feedback delivered to students. This addition would enhance the monitoring of assessments and ensure that the feedback mechanisms are consistent throughout the Institution and that good practice is effectively disseminated.

4.4     Student Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**             ☒ Met       ☐ Partially Met     ☐ Not Met
**Comments**

Students have access to appropriate pastoral support to ensure their well-being. An in-house student counselling service is available and a contract has been established with a hospital for students to receive an annual medical review. Students also have access to twice yearly dental checks. This is in addition to the support provided to students in their search for employment, the encouragement of voluntary and charitable work and the provision of a wide range of social clubs covering various student activities. Students also have access to an Institution telephone number in the event that they need to make contact in an emergency outside normal hours.

Students' academic progress is effectively supported and regularly reviewed. Academic guidance is provided by teaching staff. Students can review their progress through the VLE and have access to teaching staff via electronic means outside normal university hours. In addition, comprehensive administrative support is provided.

Assessment outcomes are monitored to enable the identification of students who are not making satisfactory progress and prompt intervention is made where appropriate. The Institution operates a tutor coaching system comprising a small group of teaching staff from different disciplines who provide assistance to students displaying sub-standard performance. In addition, each member of teaching staff has an allocation of two hours a week in their timetable set aside for remedial tuition.

Students confirmed that the guidance they receive from teaching staff is good and helpful. The guidance system enables staff to identify issues arising at an early stage and to take remedial action quickly. This also helps students develop confidence in their abilities.

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4.5     Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**          ☒ Met      ☐ Partially Met      ☐ Not Met
**Comments**

The Institution has ownership of its premises, which are well equipped, maintained and fit for purpose. Signage is clear and classrooms and study areas are appropriate to group sizes. The facilities include the provision of areas for staff and students to undertake their work.

The number of computers available in the library and the number of Information Technology (IT) laboratories for student use has been doubled. The library has been expanded, with additional textbooks made available. There are two full-time IT technicians employed and software development is outsourced to ensure its ongoing relevance.

The library contains hard-copy texts books and has access to electronic books and journals. There are four dedicated rooms for private study after academic hours. As a result, the library and other study facilities provided by the Institution effectively support the students' learning and progress.

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4.6     Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**          ☒ Met      ☐ Partially Met      ☐ Not Met
**Comments**

Student feedback is obtained through appropriate formal student representation mechanisms. Students confirmed that they complete a satisfaction survey anonymously at the end of each semester. The surveys are collected and reviewed by senior management, who identify any common issues. Any issues are raised with the relevant Heads of Department and actions are taken as appropriate.

In addition, any adverse issues are reported through the quality assurance process to the relevant committee as appropriate. Action taken is recorded and followed up in the subsequent meeting. This ensures that issues are identified within an appropriate timescale and actions implemented and effectively reported back to staff and committee members as well as to students.

The documentation relating to the quality assurance process is comprehensive, providing staff and students with appropriate guidance on the Institution's quality assurance procedures.

The Institution carries out regular and systematic monitoring of its operations and reviews its performance against clearly set performance indicators. The review of performance is focused on consideration of academic results, levels of student recruitment, and staff and student satisfaction survey results. Information on market analysis of the standing and prestige of the Institution, and feedback from employers and voluntary organisations with which RIU has links also inform the review process.

Progress against the strategic objectives is carried out against key performance indicators relate to. Any deviation from what is regarded as satisfactory leads to remedial action. This enables the Institution to continue reviewing its progress towards meeting its strategic objectives.

Particular attention is paid to the quality of the student learning experience and to students' fair treatment. Students are encouraged to give constructive criticism of the teaching they receive.

Some class-based assignment tasks are set that involve different groups of students within the class tackling different aspects of the overall task. Constructive feedback is provided to the different groups of students. The feedback to each group is shared with the whole class, thereby enhancing the learning experience of all the students.

The Institution is developing a code of good practice for the guidance of teaching staff in their delivery and assessment. This will enable consistent good practice to be maintained throughout the Institution.

Reports and action plans for enhancement are implemented and regularly reviewed within the Institution's committee structure. An annual plan is produced at the beginning of the academic year, with key performance indicators set for its review. The annual plan is the operational element of the strategic plan. At the end of each semester, progress towards achieving the aims of the annual plan is reviewed. The aims of the plan and the outcomes are reviewed within the Institution's annual report and the outcomes inform the next annual plan.

Through establishing its strategic and annual operational plans, the Institution is able to assess what it needs to do in order to ensure that its education offering continues to meet the needs of its students.

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4.7     Online, Distance and Blended Learning (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**  ☒ Met    ☐ Partially Met    ☐ Not Met    ☐ NA
**Comments**

Staff have an understanding of the specific requirements of online learning. Staff received comprehensive training before delivering online, including on how to share material and information with students using the VLE platform.

Academic staff are properly and continuously trained with respect to the Institution's policies, student needs, instructional approaches and techniques, and the use of appropriate instructional technology. The training that staff receive is well structured and guidance continues to be given on teaching techniques in the light of experience. Staff share common problems in their delivery and receive feedback from students. Protocols have been developed to aid online delivery and learning.

Teaching staff have an understanding of the special challenges and demands of online learning. Staff confirmed that, with effective IT support, they were able to resolve any issues that arose. There is high praise from staff and students for the IT support they receive. Teaching staff explained that the advent of online teaching enables students to carry out real-time research of topics through internet searches while teaching takes place.

Staff ensure that students are made aware of the necessary level of digital literacy required to follow the stated programmes. Instructions and suggestions on how to study and use the online tutorial materials are made available to assist students in learning effectively and efficiently. Students receive comprehensive guidance on access to the online teaching platform at the start of each academic year. This includes student workshops.

The Institution has provided additional computer hardware on site for students who are unable to access laptop computers of their own or who would prefer not to take online lessons at home. The students observed that they believed that the quality of the educational experience had not diminished after the implementation of online teaching. Inspection findings confirm this.

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4.8     Compliance Declaration

**Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.**          ☒ Yes     ☐ No

**PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS**

**STRENGTHS**

The Institution continues to have a clear vision and strategy that aim to ensure its graduates are valued by employers.

The teaching staff are committed and well respected by students, engendering strong loyalty to the Institution.

Students are well supported in their academic progress in a culture that encourages independence of thought and learning and helps them to achieve their goals.

The quality assurance processes are focused on continuous improvement, which enhances the quality of the students' learning experience.

**ACTIONS REQUIRED**

| None | ☐ High    ☐ Medium    ☐ Low |
|------|------------------------------|

**RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT** *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

It is recommended that the Institution includes a diagrammatic model of the quality assurance process within its procedure documentation.

The Institution should review its policy on complaints and appeals as appropriate, to clarify that appeals against academic judgement are not permitted.

It is recommended that the Institution makes explicit reference to ensuring consistency of student feedback in its internal and external quality assurance procedures.

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE**