



International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

Bachelor of Sociology and Social work

Ajman University

College of Humanities and Sciences

United Arab Emirates

—
May 2021

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High Council for evaluation of research and higher education

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International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION REPORT

Bachelor of Sociology and Social work

Ajman University

College of Humanities and Sciences

United Arab Emirates

January 2021



The Ajman University has mandated the Hcéres to perform the evaluation of its Bachelor of Sociology and social work programme. The evaluation is based on the "External Evaluation Standards" of foreign study programmes, adopted by the Hcéres Board on October 4th, 2016. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

On account of exceptional circumstances, the organisation of the evaluation was adapted (replacement of the physical onsite visit by the panel by a visit by videoconference), while remaining compliant with the fundamental principles of institution or study programme evaluation: external evaluation standard applied, the SER and requested annexes sent by the institution, panel of experts set up by Hcéres, collegial work by the panel, interviews with the institution and its partners by videoconference, report drafted and then sent to the institution in its provisional and then final version, response by the institution to the report by the panel. This specific procedure is in line with the official position defined jointly by EQAR and ENQA.¹

For the Hcéres¹:

Thierry Coulhon, President

On behalf of the experts committee²:

Marc-Éric Gruénais, President of the committee

In accordance with the decree n°2014-1365, November 14th, 2014,

¹ The president of Hcéres "contresigne les rapports d'évaluation établis par les comités d'experts et signés par leur président." (Article 8, alinéa 5) — "countersigns the assessment reports made by the experts' committees and signed by their president" (article 8, alinea 5).

² The evaluation reports "sont signés par le président du comité". (Article 11, alinéa 2) — "are signed by the president of the committee" (article 11, alinea 2).

¹ <https://enqa.eu/index.php/home/enqa-statement-on-covid-19-pandemic/>

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I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET

- University/institution: Ajman University
- Component, faculty or department concerned: College of Humanities and Sciences
- Programme's title: Bachelor of Sociology and Social work
- Training/speciality: Bachelor of Sociology and Social work
- Year of creation and context:
Ajman University (AU) was founded as the first private university in the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1988 and took the name "Ajman University" in 2016. It counts 9 Colleges, 22 Undergraduate Programs and 14 Post-graduate Programs. In 2019 reorganization led to the creation of several colleges including the College of Humanities and Sciences with two Undergraduates programs (Bachelors) and two post-graduate programs (Master and Professional Diploma). The Bachelor of Sociology and Social Work Program is one of the two Undergraduate programs and obtained Full Accreditation by the Commission for Academic Accreditation in March 2019.
- Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus):
The Bachelor is offered in the city of Ajman, Emirate of Ajman, United Arab Emirates. The University has a single campus.
- Program director:
Surname, first name: Nasef Saeed
Profession and grade: Professor
Main subject taught: Sociology

Methods and results of the previous accreditation(s)

- Methodology and agency
The university has a strong commitment to quality assurance. The AU Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness monitors the assessment and continuous improvement processes of all units of the University and evaluate their outcomes for research and training to meet the international standards. The study programme follows the standards set by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) and its International External Review Team (ERT) within the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education. The College of Humanities and Sciences has to demonstrate that the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Work Program is aligned with the National Qualifications Framework, itself aligned with the European Qualifications Framework.
- Results
The Bachelor and Social Work Program obtained its national initial accreditation in 2011, and its full accreditation in 2019 by the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Education, like all other programs of Ajman University.
According to QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) World University Rankings, in 2020 Ajman University ranks in the range of 751-800 worldwide and 45th in Arab Region; AU ranks 4th globally for international faculty and 6th for international students.

Human and material resources dedicated to the programme

- Human resources
The Bachelor of Sociology and Social Work Program counts 24 faculty members: 3 professors, 5 associate professors, 10 assistant professors, 4 lecturers, 2 adjunct faculty members. The disciplines are: Sociology (9) ; Social Anthropology (1) ; Psychology (2) ; language and translation (5) ; Social work (2) ; Development studies (3) ; Philosophy (1) ; Curriculum and Teaching (1).
Administrative staff counts 7 members who are: Teaching assistant (2); Research Assistant (1); Lab Supervisor (1); Secretary (2); Administrative Officer (1).
- Material resources
The classrooms are furnished with technology equipment and movable classroom desks to ensure the interactive learning process. There are computer labs for students. Ajman University Library has 22,953 Books, 338,686 e-Books, and 12 databases specialized in Humanities and Social Sciences; it provides 983 research titles in the field of Sociology and Social work.

Student population: evolution and typology over the last 4 years

Academic Year	Registered Students						Graduates		
	Fall			Spring			Males	Females	Total
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total			
2016-2017	222	415	637	231	427	658	32	83	115
2017-2018	220	431	651	210	425	635	35	77	112
2018-2019	223	389	612	169	330	499	32	78	110
2019-2020	250	337	587	235	300	535	20	30	50

II. ON-LINE VISIT DESCRIPTION

Composition of the experts panel

- Dr Marc-Eric Gruénais, Chair of the panel, Full Professor, Université de Bordeaux
- Dr Stéphane Alvarez, Expert, Associate Professor, Université Grenoble Alpes
- Dr Alexandra Poli, Expert, Tenured Researcher, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales - Paris
- Ms Julie Ponge, Student expert, PhD candidate, Université de Bordeaux.

Hcéres was represented by Dr Marie Olivier, Science Advisor, and Michelle Houppé, Head of project.

On-line visit description

- Date of the visit: September 21 & 22, 2020.
- Summary of the proceedings:
A Self-Evaluation Report was provided by the University and the programme to be accredited. This report was evaluated by the experts. Then a two-day meeting was set up with the experts and the University and programme staff members, alumni, students, and employers for further details and additional information. A final evaluation report, taking account also information provided during the meeting, has been drawn up.
- Organisation of the visit:
September 21: i) opening session with top management; ii) discussion about the Bachelor with staff members of the College of Humanities and Sciences; iii) self-evaluation and quality assurance session; iv) meeting with alumni and employers.
September 22: i) meeting with a representative panel of teachers from the College; ii) meeting with a representative panel of students; iii) closing session.
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited:
A large number of very informative documents were made available to the panel of experts; all on line meeting sessions were very well organized; representative panels of all Academic departments was set up; the experts appreciated the effort to select anglophone and francophone speakers for each session.
- People met:
University top management; staff members of the College of Humanities and Sciences; members of various Academic committees; officers in charge of planning, evaluation and quality assurance; teaching staff of the Programme; alumni, students and employers.
- Any problems:
Due to the health situation, the panel of experts was not able to visit the University; they have been deprived of the additional benefits of direct exchanges. All sessions were conducted online, with no technical problem, and the exchanges were of high-quality level.

III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1 – Presentation of the study programme

The Bachelor of Sociology and Social work located at the College of Humanities and Sciences of Ajman University is a four-year study programme combining the acquisition of knowledge in sociology with an emphasis on social work. In this regard, the study programme covers a large spectrum of teachings which combine an overview on Sociology (origin and development, branches of sociology related to social work such as sociology of the family and sociology of Education), an introduction of associated disciplines (anthropology, social psychology) and a range of approaches related to different areas of social work (community service, Family and Social Counseling, Social work in medical area for instance).

2 - Presentation of the programme's self-evaluation approach

The Programme drawn up a very comprehensive report with a lot of appendix which provide useful information about the courses, the partnerships, AU policies, etc. The self-evaluation report follows precisely the framework provided by Hcéres.

IV. EVALUATION REPORT

1 - Aims of the study programme

Standard 1-1: The study programme has explicit objectives with regard to knowledge and skills to be acquired.

The Programme is embedded in the three College missions:

- To train committed and highly qualified graduates to be able to contribute to the nation's continuous progress
- To promote research traditions and skills
- To provide community services through a variety of activities and consultancies.

The study programme follows the standards set by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) and its International External Review Team (ERT) within the Ministry of Education. It is on this basis that Ajman University has planned five clear key objectives for the programme:

- Enabling the student to acquire basic knowledge in various branches of sociology
- Training the student according to local and international values and virtues
- Developing the students' research capabilities in the social field
- Creating a link between theory and practice to ensure the benefit of educational outcomes in practice
- Using modern technologies to improve professional performance.

These general objectives are deployed through twelve types of required abilities classified into three main categories: knowledge (pertaining the scope and structuration of sociology and social work as discipline and approaches), skills (ability to produce analysis of social problems) and aspects of competence (such as ethical values, leadership responsibilities), which design the Programme Learning Outcomes (PLO).

Each course is connected to several learning outcomes (called Course Learning Outcome, CLO) which ensure a clear coherence between the teachings and a range of concrete achievements gained in the frame of the Bachelor's curriculum. This approach has the significant advantage of both defining objectives of each course and revealing a set of concrete projections sketching the professionalization skills of graduate students.

The syllabus is available for students on diverse supports (Ajman University website, Moodle; presentation of the CLO by the teachers at the beginning of each semester) which, hand in hand with the Information Technology tools and equipment offered by the University, provides a good level of information on the content of the program study. In this respect, the provision of information is highly convincing. Exchanges with the students during the on-line evaluation visit have confirmed these aspects and have reflected the great availability of the teaching team to shed light on these issues.

As such, the name of the study programme is clear regarding its objectives and content, it can be understood by all stakeholders. Students completing this degree become familiar with both general knowledge in sociology and specific knowledge in social work based on compulsory and elective courses completed by a 140 hours practical internship. Elective courses are divided between sociology and social work and are chosen equally in both fields by the students.

Among the five key objectives of the training study mentioned above, the third one (i.e. the training of students' according to local and international values and virtues) could be improved. The course syllabus seems to put the emphasis on the Emirati context, and it would have been interesting to have more details about the inclusion of international values and virtues in the teachings.

Standard 1-2: Outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies are explicitly stated.

Once graduated with the Bachelor's degree, students can follow two paths: pursue their studies at the Master's level or entering the professional life.

The outcomes of the Bachelor's degree in terms of professional abilities are presented in detail. The report highlights several achievements which refer to the ability to think, build and carry out a career in social work. In this respect, the main objective of the curriculum is to enhance the knowledge and skills of students who intend

to pursue careers in the social services within the public or private sectors of UAE (the employment rate for the total amount of graduates is 61.7%). The opportunities in terms of professional careers are particularly broad. In line with some key societal challenges (namely development of community services, security), the program constitutes a source of knowledge which leads to two main paths of professionalization: on the one hand, the diploma can be combined with a professional career in progress and provides additional training for a refinement of professional skills in a diversity of sectors (police, management, commercial, medical). On the other hand, the bachelor's graduation leads to specific positions in the area of social work such as social workers, professional researchers, or consultants in different public institutions. These two options make the programme attractive for many profiles of students as revealed the on-line evaluation visit. If this popularity is a strength for the Bachelor of Sociology and social work, it would have also been interesting to be more questioned and harnessed. For instance, the percentage of working students could be a useful resource both for detailing the impact of the training in a wide variety of professions and for further highlighting the relevance of sociology in different areas of the labour market.

Given the multi-faceted character of the study programme and the flexibility of course schedules, the students and other stakeholders can benefit from personalized learning paths as well as a variety of professional outcomes. These assets offer a broad spectrum of employability and professional evolution. Once again, this diversity could be more enlightened in terms of job opportunities both in the public and private sectors.

The objectives in terms of further studies are also clearly specified. Students who wish to continue in sociology can apply to the programme of Master in applied sociology and then PhD in general sociology at the University of Sharjah (Emirate of Sharjah). The on-line evaluation visit has also revealed that the students can pursue their studies in other disciplines or fields (such as management). This last aspect could have been more highlighted in order to understand the pedagogical bridges between the bachelor of Sociology and social Work and other disciplines both at Ajman University and other Emirati universities. There is currently an active reflection within the College of Humanities and Sciences on the creation of a Master's degree in sociology at Ajman University.

2 – Position of the study programme

Standard 2-1: The study programme states its position in the local, regional, national or international environment, as applicable.

Initially, the social work program was implemented by the Emirates University and the Bachelor program in sociology at Sharjah University. The College of Humanities and Sciences in Ajman University decided to offer a different program, combining sociology and social work. In Ajman University, the program is one of the 22 undergraduate formations, and one of the 2 BA of the College of Humanities & Sciences (the other one is a BA in Psychology). At the national level, similar study programs exist in two universities, The Emirates University (Social Work) and The University of Sharjah (Sociology). At the regional level and international level, training in Sociology and Social Work exists at The Sultan Qaboos University (Sultanate of Oman) and at Yarmouk University in Jordan. The specificity of the program is to offer a multidisciplinary training combining sociology and social work. This makes the program attractive, especially at the national level. The university attaches great importance to ranking, which reflects the constant concern to position the institution in the national, regional and international academic and research context.

The university has an important network of partners about which it is not always easy to appreciate the degree of formalization (personal network of the members of the teaching team, specific convention, international research contracts, etc.). Clearly, the program members benefit from these networks and/or are themselves involved in setting up partnerships.

Standard 2-2: There is a clear link between the study programme and research.

The programme has an explicit position with regard to the world of research. The laboratories, doctoral schools and other higher education bodies or institutions, including international institutions, which support the study programme, have been clearly listed. The contribution of associate or guest lecturers or researchers supports links between teaching and research. The programme includes components of teaching through research or just in association with research (laboratory-based project or internship, seminars, etc.).

Students are prepared to research: 6 of 24 compulsory courses "support and emphasize the scientific research". Opportunities for students further study should increase with the implementation of new masters in social sciences at Ajman University (see above), a necessary condition for specialization in research activities. At the moment the PhD program in Sociology is based at Sharjah University. Nevertheless, given the number of employed students and the professionalizing purpose of the bachelor's degree, the specific orientation towards

further studies with specialization in research activities is not a main priority. There is not yet a structured research unit in social science linked to the program and it will be useful to create one in sociology. To better prepare students for familiarization with research activities will also require an improvement in their level of English language.

The university attaches great importance to research, funding internal research grants, research groups, attendance to international scientific meetings especially for their teaching members. Clear research and publication policies at Ajman University are supporting the study programme, and the University is particularly attentive to publication in indexed journals. The university takes into account the involvement in research activities and academic publications for the evaluation of its faculty members.

Standard 2-3: The study programme explicitly states its relationships with businesses, associations and other cultural or industrial partners, including international partners.

Ajman University has several agreements with national public and private organizations operating in different sectors (business, police, education, law, medicine, public administrations...), and with academic institutions all over the world (Europe, Mediterranean Region, Asia, North and Central America). At the local level, research may be conducted with non-academic public institutions, such as the Ajman Council, since these institutions can provide research grants. Some partnerships are focused in business (banks, harbor). More details on the benefits for the programme of all these agreements were expected and, more specifically, the extent to which these partnerships provide internship and employment opportunities in the field of social work.

Standard 2-4: The study programme explicitly states the added value of its partnerships with foreign higher education institutions.

Once again, academic and non-academic partnerships are numerous, including at the local level, and research activities are valued and promoted by the university. Teachers know how to seize opportunities for international mobility. The research conducted by teachers contributes to specializations in teaching fields. Teacher recruitment is very international, especially at the sub-regional level. The institutional structuring of research is still in progress and it is perhaps still too early to really appreciate the linkages between training and research.

3 – Study programme teaching structure

Standard 3-1: The structure of the study programme is adapted to the different student academic pathways.

The programme consists of a total of 42 courses equivalent to 126 credit hours. The 126 credit hours are divided between the following courses:

- 24 Sociology Compulsory majoring Courses (72 credit hours)
- 4 Sociology Elective Courses to be chosen amongst 11 sociology courses (12 credit hours)
- 4 Social work Elective Courses to be chosen from a list of 11 social work courses (12 credit hours)
- 10 general University Courses (Compulsory, Elective and Free) (30 credit hours)

The Bachelor programme is completed after four academic years. Each academic year is divided into semesters. The fall and spring semesters last 16 weeks. In addition, two shorter summer semesters can be taken on an optional basis. During each semester, students are expected to attend between 3 and 6 courses for a study load amounting from 9 to 18 hours a week. Each course is equivalent to 3 credit hours. A comprehensive and detailed syllabus describing all compulsory courses is available in Arabic and in English. The syllabus shows courses content consistent with the defined objectives. Progress and gradual specialization are monitored and guided through an agreed study plan with the supervision of an Academic Advisor. The suggested study plan provides for a gradual evolution in courses, from the foundational theoretical subjects to the more practical ones. The available courses cover various fields of sociology and social work. In order to get the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Work, students must enroll for no less than three years and a half and not more than eight years, attend all 126 hours courses and have a minimum cumulative Grade Points Average (CGPA) of 2.0 on a scale of 4.0.

The programme accommodates students with different profiles and is taking into account the challenges associated with continuous lifelong learning. Customized learning paths are offered to a large diversity of

students thanks to the flexibility in the choice of course content, calendar and schedule. In that matter, the possibility to extend the programme from 4 to 8 years, the optional summer semesters, the evening classes and the new forms of distance education especially allow the students with work duties to enroll and benefit from the programme. Moreover, facilities and services are available for students with disabilities.

Standard 3-2: The content of the study programme is consistent with the requirements of the socioeconomic world.

Regarding students' information about the job market and their preparation for employment, practical work components in the study programme are listed in the course description. In the documents provided, a total of five courses are categorized as practical courses. Two practical courses are preparing students to use statistical analysis tools and social research methods. They introduce them to practically apply their knowledge and scientific methods during their fieldwork occurring within the two last years of the programme. The trainings and the achievement of a graduation project represent the three other practical courses and the concrete application of the studies. The third year training consists of a field visit in a social institution operating in the United Arab Emirates and preparing for the following year field training. The fourth year training in the same social institution is completed by the final graduation project. Therefore, documents show that practical level is gradually experienced and reached essentially within the last year of the degree. The virtual visit added substantial key insights on how students were prepared to their socioeconomic environment. Additional courses present a practical dimension approach and would deserve to be more emphasized as such in the programme description. The role of the Career and Placement office has been demonstrated and is also key in disseminating information about the socioeconomic environment.

Currently, amongst the 42 courses taught, 40 courses are taught in Arabic and 2 courses in English: "Communication Skills" and "Texts in Sociology and Social Work in English"; (in addition, one University elective course is taught in French amounting to 3 credit hours). These 2 English courses of the programme equivalent to 6 credit hours do not seem sufficient in order to reach a command of English consistent with the socioeconomic and academic world. It has been assessed that the reality of the labor market in the United Arab Emirates and the world of research consider English and academic English proficiency as important skills to master. On the same level, the new national requirement made by the Ministry of Education mention that 20% of the training courses should be delivered in English.

Standard 3-3: Projects and internships are a key teaching tool, with specific support mechanisms.

As a key teaching tool, the internship and the project linked to it assess the ability for the student to apply all the theoretical and practical knowledge learnt throughout the programme. The internship takes place in a social institution operating in the United Arab Emirates. Information and guidance are made possible by providing a support system that enables students to find internship and develop career plans that are essential to the student development of Ajman University. This is made possible with the support of the Career and Placement office enabling students to be informed about the socioeconomic environment and develop their career paths. The objectives are clearly stated and as such, the final graduation project takes a crucial part in the study programme curriculum. The important research work should be acknowledged and congratulated.

Standard 3-4: The study programme allows students to acquire additional skills that are useful for employment or further study.

Students are invited to participate in various activities in order to develop skills related to the social and academic field. Therefore, participation to research assistance, community activities and department committees help them to enhance their social responsibility and acquire soft skills that will be useful for their academic or professional future.

Standard 3-5: The study programme encourages the use of digital technologies and other innovative teaching methods.

The campus and the department of Sociology offer a very conducive learning environment with modern facilities, good services and a committed teaching team. Even though interactive and innovative teaching practices are not emphasized in the course description, the virtual visit showed that within the department, a very dedicated team of faculty members provide a quality education through innovative teaching. Excellent recruitment, regular workshops and a dedicated teaching and learning centre enable the teaching team to develop teaching methodologies including the use of technology tools. The computer laboratory and services provided by the Office of Information Technology also offer an encouragement to use digital technologies on

the campus. Several services are provided such as the E-learning management system. The Moodle platform is used for distance learning and ensure communication between faculty members and students inside and outside classrooms. Conferences can be recorded and broadcasted. Debates and discussion groups are used to enhance knowledge on main topics in sociology and social work. Innovative teaching practice also takes place through project-based and team-based learning with a community approach dimension.

Standard 3-6: The study programme offers specific tools for successful programme completion.

Students benefit from a wide range of human and physical resources to ensure a successful programme completion. The student's work is largely monitored and guided. A team of committed members of the faculty foster a culture of quality assurance. Important human resources are made available through academic advisors, a counseling unit and a recently introduced Student Success Center. The role of the academic advisor is an important component for the success of the student during the programme and beyond. Each student receives individual support and guidance from an academic advisor who guides around 30 students. A strong culture of quality assurance is developed through control and disciplinary measures to manage plagiarism and fraud.

Standard 3-7: The study programme prepares students for the international environment.

Foreign languages identified in the curriculum are English and French as an option. As mentioned above, English language is taught for 6 credit hours and, in addition, it is possible to choose a French language course equivalent to 3 credit hours as a General Elective University course. The department mentioned that the new 20% quota courses in English will be required by the Ministry of Education as a way to assure a good command of English for students. This would provide a better adequacy with the current conducive environment for more research and subsequently an improved preparation for the international environment.

As far as international mobility is concerned, a substantial work has been shown to develop international and institutionalized partnerships. The sociology department is organizing and hosting seminars inviting participants from international universities with the aim of ensuring a broader exposure to an international community as well as enhancing the visibility and positioning of the University. When the internationality of the programme is obvious through the diversity of nationalities amongst its faculty members and students, and the range of international accreditations delivered to the university, the internationalization and especially student exchanges could be developed. This is partly done through the new Academic Ambassador Programme also serving the purpose of strengthening partnership and encouraging mobility. The number of external grant agencies and opportunities to apply are limited. To address the challenges linked to limited exchange opportunities, the Ajman University has recently introduced an Outbound Exchange Scholarship (OXS) with the aim to promote outgoing student mobility.

4 - Management of the study programme

Standard 4-1: The study programme is implemented by a formally identified teaching team.

The Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Work is managed by a departmental council chaired by the head of department. The composition of the departmental council is specified and meets expectations: at least 1 student participates in the departmental council, as well as members of the teaching team. The report provided in appendix 43 clearly shows that the departmental council is the steering committee that allows the program to be in a process of continuous improvement. Overall, the Bachelor is managed in a relevant and efficient way. It has all the administrative, educational and material resources to carry out its mission.

Beyond the departmental council, other consultative committees participate in the organization of the department and the bachelor: there are a total of 14 committees for the department. Each committee is chaired by a member of the teaching team. Students are invited to the department council. The composition of the committees is specified, and reports are available (see the appendix). The management of the program is well defined and structured.

The teaching team is made up of 3 professors, 6 associate professors, 11 assistant professors and 4 lecturers. The teaching team is international: teachers come from Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, Syria, Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen and the United States. Two teachers are Emirati. This information is broadcasted to students and to the audiences concerned. The roles and responsibilities of the members of the teaching team within the various committees are specified.

The teaching team can take advantage of training programs for career development and skills improvement offered by the Continuing Education Center - Training Unit of Ajman University. The training programs followed

by the members of the teaching team are specified in appendix 36 and make it possible to positively assess the concern for improving the skills of Ajman University staff.

No information regarding the intervention of external teachers from the industrial, socioeconomic or cultural sectors is provided. The bachelor would benefit from supplementing its teaching team with the contribution of non-academic speakers to strengthen its relationships with the socioeconomic environment.

Standard 4-2: Knowledge is assessed according to specifically stated methods communicated to students.

All the information concerning the assessment of knowledge and its modalities, the validation rules and the organization of the juries are available in the student handbook distributed to each student. All these modalities are consistent with the program and its aims. During the virtual visit, the teaching team specified that new form of "COVID" online assessment are being implemented. The teachers' reactivity, availability and support for students is to be lauded.

Standard 4-3: The study programme works to monitor skills acquisition.

The Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) meet the university's expectations for the skills that students are expected to acquire. The PLO of the bachelor is consistent with the national qualifications framework (QFEmirates). The Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Social Work has defined 12 PLOs to cover all the knowledges, skills and competences required for graduation. These PLOs are relevant and consistent with the training and with its purposes.

Each bachelor's course defines a set of Course Learning Outcomes (CLO), from the 12 PLOs defined by the bachelor programme. The CLO describes the skills that students must achieve at the end of the course to be able to succeed. For each course, the associated PLOs are specified. The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) implemented a programme on line for students to follow their acquisition of CLOs.

Monitoring the acquisition of skills is therefore a major concern of the program and the procedures and actions implemented are relevant. The evaluation is very positive.

Standard 4-4: Student numbers and the different enrolment regimes for the study programme are clearly identified.

The self-evaluation report explained that there is an admission criteria, with very well specified procedures. The discussions with the teaching staff and the students during the visit highlighted the lack of effective selection, and a proposition to include a selection at the entrance in the admission criteria was formulated.

The programme performs an important benchmarking and communication work for attracting potential candidates. The number of registered students is clearly significant, nevertheless it is not easy to assess the real attractiveness of the program regarding the background of the students.

The numbers of registered students are specified by academic year and by gender. The number of registered students decreased between 2016-2017 and 2019-2020: 658 versus 535. This decrease is not analyzed in the self-evaluation report which is very descriptive. It should had been useful to have more detailed statistical information to be able to analyze the evolution of the number of students. The success rate is specified in the "Fact book": it is 98.9% for students who go up to the 4th year of the bachelor.

The number of students who have dropped out of the bachelor's degree is known but not analysed.

This point related to the student numbers flux in the self-evaluation report should be analyzed.

Standard 4-5: The study programme has comprehensive information on graduate outcomes.

The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) helps to keep in touch with alumni graduates. Events and activities are organized for this purpose, and a follow-up of alumni, of their situation, level of employment and sector of activity is carried out.

In fact, a list of the names of alumni with their position is available, but without any analysis. It would have been expected to have more precise statistical elements and a comment to know the quality of professional integration.

Standard 4-6: The study programme is based on a publicly available quality assurance and ethics policy

The OIPE makes a significant job to assess the quality of the program quality policy, in accordance with the standards of the United Arab Emirates commission for academic accreditation. With each training College, it ensures the internal and external evaluation of each bachelor. It carries out internal evaluation with students and an external evaluation with an external team, regarding teaching and evaluation methods, as well as anti-fraud measures. The continuous improvement process is effective and can be positively appreciated. The work of OIPE is to be commended.

OIPE continually provides numbers, statistics and research-based analysis in order to assess the institution/program's performance for the whole Ajman University. However, a detailed analysis for the Bachelor of sociology academic programme should be conducted.

V. CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, due to the health situation, the expert committee was unable to make an on-site visit which necessarily deprived the panel of obtaining additional information which is always the added value of direct interactions. Nevertheless, the online visit, very well organized by Ajman university, allowed the experts to dialogue with a large panel of persons of different status (from the top management team to students) and to bring useful clarifications in addition to a very complete self-evaluation report.

The originality of the program is to offer a multidisciplinary training combining sociology and social work which makes the program attractive at the national level but also at the regional level (East Mediterranean area). The management of the program is specified to the students; it is consistent with the objectives and expectations. The teaching team is very committed and available for the students. Students have a very good working environment. The quality of teaching and student monitoring is excellent, and the follow-up of students is tailor-made with a wide range of elective courses chosen according to the student's specific interests and availability. The University attaches great importance to international ranking and quality assurance, to research and academic publications, and has numerous partnerships, at national, regional and international level, in academic and non-academic sectors. Overall, the experts noted the continuous improvement of the work environment; the implementation of a specific research units in sociology could be beneficial to the program and the creation of a master's degree.

The link between sociology and social work needs to be better articulated, especially with regard to the job opportunities for graduated students. Practical training should be improved.

The available information does not provide a clear overall vision of the graduate students' professionalization. Internationalization is unquestionably one of the characteristics of both the university and the program (recruitment of teachers and students, partnerships, research networks). However, it does not yet permeate the teaching which is delivered with, on the one hand, a still insufficient level of English and, on the other hand, activities that are very much focused on the local level.

Strengths

- Individualised study plan and excellent student monitoring programme taking into account the challenges associated with lifelong learning
- Clarity of the study programme in terms of learning outcomes, and a broad spectrum of outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies
- Conducive teaching and learning environment ensured by a committed teaching team with international scope and innovative support services
- Strong involvement in quality assurance, and importance given to the ranking, linked with valorization of research and academic publications
- Importance of national, regional, and international partnerships and networks.

Weaknesses

- Limited amount of English and Academic English courses and limited opportunities for outgoing student mobility
- Practical teaching especially in social work would deserve to be more emphasized
- Statistical information on registered students, graduate students, alumni and professional integration are not sufficiently analysed.
- Research activities are still insufficiently structured.

Recommendations

The high diversity of the outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies could be more specified and valued. For instance, the diversity of professional experiences, particularly represented within the student population (both at the admission and graduation stages of the Bachelor's degree), should be further illustrated and analysed in the light of the place of Sociology and Social Work in Emirati society. This would both enhance the added value of the original combination of Sociology and Social Work in the study programme and fuel the reflection about the future Master of Sociology in Ajman University.

The programme would benefit from better emphasis on practical skills and English and Academic English courses throughout the programme. These useful skills would be an asset for the future employment and further studies

of students. Additional training in English academic language would provide a wider internationalisation and consistency with a better access to the world of research and publications.

Since a lot of students are already employed, it would be interesting to list and assess additional skills acquired prior experiential learning and during the studies. Therefore, professional and language skills but also different commitments in society could be validated and given value to within the programme.

The practical teaching, its definition and application in the job market would deserve to be better and more emphasized and implemented from the beginning of the programme.

The substantial statistical work done at the institutional level merits further analysis with information that can be more directly used to document student-tracking at the program level, especially regarding their employment sector.

Some international partnerships should be more institutionalized to promote student and teacher mobility.

It is expected that more research activities will be conducted in a social science laboratory setting to foster links between research and teaching.

VI. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION



جامعة عجمان
AJMAN UNIVERSITY

December 16, 2020

Dr. François Pernot
Director
Europe & International Department
Hcéres

Dear Dr. François,

On behalf of Ajman University and the College of Humanities and Sciences, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Hcéres and its Experts Committee for detailed review and constructive evaluation of the Bachelor of Sociology and Social Work. I greatly appreciate the efforts undertaken to examine the program and the pertinent recommendations made on the completion of this considerable work.

The final report provides a reasonable, objective and comprehensive evaluation of the program and I concur with the emergent conclusion, comments and suggestions. The findings and recommendations are undoubtedly very useful given the commitment of the College of Humanities and Sciences to continuous improvement of its programs.

Our comments on the recommendations provided by the Experts Committee are as follows:

1. "The high diversity of the outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies could be more specified and valued." For instance, the diversity of professional experiences, particularly represented within the student population (both at the admission and graduation stages of the Bachelor's degree), should be further illustrated and analyzed in the light of the place of Sociology and Social Work in Emirati society. This would both enhance the added value of the original combination of Sociology and Social Work in the study program and fuel the reflection about the future Master of Sociology in Ajman University.

Ajman University fully agrees with the Experts Committee on the value that could be presented by a follow-up and a careful analysis of the professional opportunities offered to our graduates for the valorization of our program. The latter is distinguished on a regional scale by the combination of sociology and social work. This combination responds to institutional needs for which this dual training is quite beneficial in terms of employability and variation of work domains. The special importance attached to the community service and social responsibility in the context of local society underpinned this strategic choice of distinction vis-à-vis institutions offering sociology or social work programs and of labor market adjustment. In this regard, we shall carry out more specified further studies as recommended by the Experts Committee.

2. "The program would benefit from better emphasis on practical skills and English and Academic English courses throughout the program." These useful skills would be an asset for the future employment and further studies of students. Additional training in English academic language would provide a wider internationalization and consistency with a better access to the world of research and publications.

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Ajman University fully agrees with the Experts Committee and will take this recommendation into consideration in the design of new courses before the renewal of the national accreditation. On the one hand, the department intends to increase the number of practical courses. These courses will be designed according to identified employability's criteria. On the other hand, special attention will be given to implement English as a language of instruction since the English proficiency requirement has been imposed by the national accreditation agency (CAA) and has become part of the requirements for admission to the program starting from the fall semester of AY 2020-2021. Consequently, the students are now provided the opportunity to register in English Language Proficiency courses offered by the Continuing Education Center at Ajman University. In addition, the College of Humanities and Sciences, through its Department of Foreign Languages, will continue offering free intensive English courses to the program's students to produce competitive graduates with parallel distinctive linguistic skills.

3. "Since a lot of students are already employed, it would be interesting to list and assess additional skills acquired prior experiential learning and during the studies." Therefore, professional and language skills but also different commitments in society could be validated and given value to within the program.

Ajman University fully understands the importance of this recommendation. Accordingly, Ajman University shall further develop the existing assessment process to assess students' additional skills and knowledge acquired prior to experiential learning and during the studies, as recommended by the Experts Committee. It will also assist in analyzing the training institutions and various companies' internal environment, relations and needs for a better preparation of students to join these institutions.

4. "The Practical teaching, its definition and application in the job market would deserve to be better preparation and more emphasized and implemented from the beginning of the program."

We are fully aware of the relevance of such emphasis on practical teaching. That is why, new pedagogic approaches, mainly student-centered learning and teaching strategies are now employed across each program in the College and are appropriate to the learning outcomes. The department will further adopt a more inclusive approach of practical dimensions in course design, specifically in earlier stage of the program. In this regard, we will further opt for integrated courses, supervised work sessions or inter-years surveys.

5. "The substantial statistical work done at the institutional level merits further analysis with information that can be more directly used to document student-tracking at the program level, especially regarding their employment sector."

Ajman University completely agrees with the Experts Committee that an appropriate statistical analysis is useful to ensure better monitoring of student pathways and to develop the program. It is worth mentioning here that the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) continually provides numbers, statistics and research-based analysis in order to assess the institution/program's performance. As recommended by the Experts Committee, a more detailed analysis would be definitely beneficial for the continuous improvement of academic programs. Analysis of statistical data is gaining an important place among the current action plans of the Department of Sociology. In this perspective, the OIPE and the Office of Alumni will take a set of appropriate procedures and actions to provide academic departments with more analyses in terms of admission, graduation and employment. As an immediate remedial action, the OIPE, in coordination with the Department of Sociology and the Office of Alumni, has prepared an admission progression report (2015 through 2020) that encompasses a detailed analysis in

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relation to student enrollment, attrition rate, graduation rate and progress and success rates in Sociology and Social Work program (refer to Appendix I). This initial output, that will be further analyzed and developed by the Department of Sociology, is quite useful to plan future improvements that will be reflected at the time of local accreditation renewal.

6. "Some international partnerships should be more institutionalized to promote student and teacher mobility. It is expected that more research activities will be conducted in a social science laboratory setting to foster links between research and teaching."

As part of its strategic plan, Ajman University is putting special focus on internationalization and is taking concrete measures such as the establishment of strong partnerships with highly ranked universities based on research or teaching collaborations or students' exchange. The University has also recently introduced the outbound exchange scholarship to incentivize students to study abroad. The Office of International Academic Affairs at Ajman University, in collaboration with the College of Humanities and Sciences, is in the process of establishing a number of partnerships with international universities that will enhance student/faculty mobility and provide them with broader exposure to international environment, such as the *Université De Paris* that will be implemented by a faculty exchange in the Sociology and Social Work program, expected by the end of January 2021.

Furthermore, the launching of five Research Centers in the University, including the Nonlinear Dynamics Research Center (NDRC) and the recently established Research unit, Social Sciences Research Unit (SSRU), shall be able to propel research projects and contribute towards practical implementation of partnerships at an international level.

Once again, I would like to thank the Hcéres Experts Committee for providing relevant and constructive feedback, which will be meticulously considered and acted upon in developing and improving the program of Sociology and Social Work.

Sincerely Yours,

K. Seghir

Karim Seghir, Ph.D.
Chancellor



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International evaluation and accreditation

ACCREDITATION DECISION

Bachelor of Sociology and Social Work

Ajman University

College of Humanities and Sciences

الكلية الإنسانية والعلوم

United Arab Emirates

الإمارات العربية المتحدة

April 2021

SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCERES

HCERES has built its evaluation process based on a set of objectives that higher education institution study programmes must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into four fields among which are the accreditation criteria.

As for the "External Evaluation Standards", the accreditation criteria have been specifically designed for foreign programmes. The accreditation criteria were adopted by the Board on June 2016 and are available on the HCERES website (hceres.fr).

The accreditation committee, meeting his accreditation decision, has wholly taken into account the final evaluation report of the study programme. This accreditation decision is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The accreditation decision issued by HCERES shall not grant any rights whatsoever, whether in France or abroad. The decision on training programme accreditation confers an accreditation label and does not infer recognition of the accredited qualifications. The HCERES accreditation process therefore has no impact on the qualifications recognition process in France.

FULFILLMENT OF ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

FIELD 1: AIMS OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Accreditation criterion

The objectives of the study programme with regard to knowledge and skills to be acquired are clearly defined and communicated. Students and other stakeholders are aware of outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies.

Assessment of criterion

- The objectives of the study programme are clear, and its contents can be understood by all stakeholders. Students completing this degree become familiar with both general knowledge in sociology and specific knowledge in social work based on compulsory and elective courses completed by practical internship.
- Each course is connected to several learning outcomes which ensure a clear coherence between the teachings and a range of concrete achievements gained in the frame of the Bachelor's curriculum. This approach has the significant advantage of both defining objectives of each course and revealing a set of concrete projections sketching the professionalization skills of graduate students.
- The syllabus is available for students on diverse supports which provide a good level of information on the content of the program study.
- The outcomes of the Bachelor's degree draws in terms of professional abilities are presented in detail. The report highlights several achievements which refer to the ability to think, build and carry out a career in social work. Given the multi-faceted character of the study programme and the flexibility of course schedules, the students and other stakeholders can benefit from personalized learning paths as well as a variety of professional outcomes.
- Among the objectives of the training study mentioned, the training of students according to local and international values and virtues could be improved.

FIELD 2: POSITION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Accreditation criterion

The study programme has set a comprehensive positioning suited to its objectives and including a clear link with research, scholarly partnerships and/or with the economic and social world, national and/or international partnerships.

Assessment of criterion

- The specificity of the program is to offer a multidisciplinary training combining sociology and social work is attractive, especially at the national level.
- Ajman University has several agreements with national public and private organizations operating in different sectors and with academic institutions all over the world. More details on the benefits and the formalization of these agreements regarding the Programme was expected, more specifically, the extent to which these partnerships provide internship and employment opportunities in the field of social work.
- The university attaches great importance to research, funding internal research grants, research groups, attendance to international scientific meetings especially for their teaching members. The programme has an explicit position with regard to the world of research. But there is not yet a structured research unit in social science linked to the program and it will be useful to create one in sociology. To better prepare students for familiarization with research activities will require an improvement in their level of English language. Generally speaking, research activities are insufficiently structured.

FIELD 3: STUDY PROGRAMME TEACHING STRUCTURE

Accreditation criterion

The study programme includes a set of teaching units that are coherent, gradual and adapted to all kind of students. The study programme allows students to acquire additional skills that are useful for employment or further study. Internships and projects are included in the study programme curriculum. So are Information and Communication Technologies in Education (ICTE) and education innovations. The study programme prepares students for the international environment.

Assessment of criterion

- Courses content are consistent with the objectives and cover various fields of sociology and social work. Progress and gradual specialization from the theoretical subjects to the more practical ones are monitored and guided through an agreed study plan with the supervision of an Academic Advisor. Nevertheless, practical teaching especially in social work could be more emphasized.
- The programme accommodates students with different profiles and is taking into account the challenges associated with continuous lifelong learning. English courses of the programme do not seem sufficient in order to reach a command of English consistent with the socio-economic and academic world.
- Students are invited to participate in various activities in order to develop skills related to the social and academic field. Therefore, participation to research assistance, community activities and department committees help them to enhance their social responsibility and acquire soft skills that will be useful for their academic or professional future.
- The campus and the department of Sociology offer a very conducive learning environment with modern facilities, good services and a committed teaching team.

FIELD 4: STUDY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Accreditation criterion

The study programme is implemented by a formally identified and operational teaching team including stakeholder and student participation. It is carried out by an educational team which benefits from clear and up-to-date data. Methods for checking knowledge are explicitly stated and communicated to students. Teaching and practical professional units are expressed in terms of skills. Anti-fraud measures have been implemented.

Assessment of criterion

- The bachelor is managed by a departmental council chaired by the head of department with student participation and has all the administrative, educational and material resources to carry out its mission. A number of other committees, which produce available reports, are set up to improve the training quality. The management of the program is well defined and structured. No information regarding the intervention of external teachers from the industrial, socio-economic or cultural sectors is provided. The bachelor would benefit from supplementing its teaching team with the contribution of non-academic speakers to strengthen its relationships with the socio-economic environment.
- All the information concerning the assessment of knowledge and its modalities, the validation rules and the organization of the juries are available in the student handbook distributed to each student. All these modalities are consistent with the program and its aims.
- The Bachelor has defined Program Learning Outcomes to cover all the knowledges, skills and competences required for graduation. Each bachelor's course defines a Course Learning Outcomes which describes the skills that students must achieve at the end of the course to be able to succeed. Monitoring the acquisition of skills is therefore a major concern of the program and the procedures and actions implemented are relevant.
- The University has implemented a student discipline and has subscribed to a software for detecting frauds. There is a gradualization in the penalties and actions taken in cases of fraud or violations of scientific integrity.
- Statistical information on registered students, graduate students, alumni and professional integration are not sufficiently analyzed.

FINAL DECISION

Considering the accreditation criteria analysis detailed above, the accreditation committee issues the following decision:

“Five-year unreserved accreditation decision”

and draws attention to the following points:

the high diversity of the outcomes in terms of job opportunities and further studies could be more specified and valued. For instance, the diversity of professional experiences, particularly represented within the student population (both at the admission and graduation stages of the Bachelor's degree), should be further illustrated and analysed in the light of the place of Sociology and Social Work in Emirati society. This would both enhance the added value of the original combination of Sociology and Social Work in the study programme and fuel the reflection about the future Master of Sociology in Ajman University.

The programme would benefit from better emphasis on practical skills and English and Academic English courses throughout the programme. These useful skills would be an asset for the future employment and further studies of students. Additional training in English academic language would provide a wider internationalisation and consistency with a better access to the world of research and publications.

Since a lot of students are already employed, it would be interesting to list and assess additional skills acquired prior experiential learning and during the studies. Therefore, professional and language skills but also different commitments in society could be validated and given value to within the programme. The practical teaching, its definition and application in the job market would deserve to be better and more emphasized and implemented from the beginning of the programme.

The substantial statistical work done at the institutional level merits further analysis with information that can be more directly used to document student-tracking at the program level, especially regarding their employment sector. Some international partnerships should be more institutionalized to promote student and teacher mobility.

It is expected that more research activities will be conducted in a social science laboratory setting to foster links between research and teaching.

SIGNATURE

For HCERES and on behalf of

Thierry COULHON,

President



Date: Paris, April 8th, 2020



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