

EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS

Master of Air and Space Law (MASL)

University of Sharjah (UoS)
College of Law

United Arab Emirates

July 2024

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International evaluation and accreditation

EVALUATION REPORT

Master of Air and Space Law (MASL)

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College of Law

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The University of Sharjah has mandated the Hcéres to perform the evaluation of its Master in Air and Space Law programme. The evaluation is based on the "External Evaluation Standards" of foreign study programmes, adopted by the Hcéres Board on January 31st, 2022. These standards are available on the Hcéres website (hceres.fr).

In the name of the expert committee¹ :

Sandrine Clavel, President of the committee

In the name of Hcéres¹ :

Stéphane Le Boulter, Acting President

¹In accordance with articles R. 114-15 and R. 114-10 of the Research Code, evaluation reports are signed by the chairman of the expert committee and countersigned by the President of Hcéres.

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I. STUDY PROGRAMME IDENTITY SHEET

- University/institution: University of Sharjah (UoS)
- Component, faculty or department concerned: College of Law
- Programme's title: Master of Air and Space Law (MASL)
- Training/speciality: Law
- Year of creation and context: 2018 (Context: see infra presentation)
- Site(s) where the programme is taught (Town and campus): Sharjah - UAE

PROGRAMME DIRECTOR

- Surname, first name: Dr. Nazzal Kisswani
- Profession and grade: Assistant Dean for Graduate Studies of Law
- Main subject taught: Commercial law

METHODS AND RESULTS OF THE PREVIOUS ACCREDITATION(S)

- On a national level: Accredited by the federal Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), Ministry of Education, UAE
- At an international level: N/A

HUMAN AND MATERIAL RESOURCES DEDICATED TO THE PROGRAMME

- Human resources: 7 professors and 6 administrative members (at the College level)
- Material resources:

The main campus is composed of the M1 Building, designated for male students, and the W1 Building, for female students.

Both buildings are alike (but for the theatre hall). However, at the master level, all classes are mixed and take place at the M1 building, both for men and women.

The M1 Building offers 14 smart classrooms, a computer lab, a simulated courtroom resembling real court setups with integrated electronic displays, and a theatre hall for academic discussions and conferences.

Similarly, the W1 Building includes 14 smart classrooms, a computer lab, a simulated courtroom.

Administrative offices, and teaching staff offices are located in the W1 and M2 Buildings, equipped with necessary furniture, computers, and a meeting room. The university boasts four libraries, two of them (one for male students and one for female students) include extensive law sections.

STUDENT POPULATION: EVOLUTION AND TYPOLOGY

The master's programme opened its first class in 2018. To date, out of the classes from 2018 to 2020, only 6 students have graduated, 6 have dropped out and 33 students are still studying. Added to this number are the 34 students enrolled in 2021 and 2022.

Retention Rates

Batch	Newly Enrolled 1st Year	End of 1st Year		End of 2nd Year		End of 3rd Year	
		Retention Rate	Attrition Rate	Retention Rate	Cumulative attrition rate	Retention Rate	Cumulative attrition rate
2018	20	18 90%	2 10%	18 90%	2 10%	16 80%	2 10%
2019	11	11 100%	0 0%	10 91%	0 0%	10 91%	0 0%
2020	13	12 92%	1 8%	11 85%	2 15%	8 62%	4 31%
2021	20	19 95%	1 5%	17 85%	3 15%		
2022	14	14 100%	0 0%				

Graduation Rates

Batch	Newly Enrolled 1st Year	Graduated end of 1st Year	Graduated end of 2nd Year	Graduated end of 3rd Year	Graduated end of 4th Year	Graduated >= 4 Years	Total Graduated	Graduation Avg Time
2018	20	0 0%	0 0%	2 10%	0 0%	0 0%	2 10%	3
2019	11	0 0%	1 9%	0 0%	2 18%		3 27%	3.33
2020	13	0 0%	0 0%	1 8%			1 8%	3
2021	20	0 0%	0 0%					
2022	14	0 0%						

II. VISIT DESCRIPTION

COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERTS PANEL

Chairman of the committee:

- Sandrine CLAVEL, Professor of Private Law at Université Paris Saclay, UVSQ

Academic experts:

- Philippe ACHILLEAS, Professor of Public Law at Université Paris Saclay
- Laure CLÉMENT-WILZ, Professor of Public law at Paris Est-Créteil Université
- Derek EL ZEIN, Senior lecturer in Political Science at Université Paris Cité
- Etienne PATAUT, Professor of Private Law and Criminal Sciences at Sorbonne Université

Student expert:

- Nawal DAFEUR, post-doctoral student at University of Poitiers.

Hcéres was represented by Professor Evelyne LANDE, scientific advisor, Europe and International Department.

VISIT DESCRIPTION

- Date of the visit: 2nd of May to 7th of May 2024
- Organisation of the visit: see table
- Cooperation of study programme and institution to be accredited: the university and the college organized the visit so that the committee could meet all the stakeholders and visit the premises. Everything has been done to respond to the requests of the committee's experts. The visit organized by the College of Law to the Sharjah Academy of Astronomy, Space Sciences & Technology was highly beneficial, enhancing the master's programme in air and space law by connecting the legal studies with practical scientific applications regarding outer space. This excursion helped clarify the programme's alignment with the university's broader scientific goals, strengthened partnerships with key research institutions, and provided valuable educational insights into the aerospace industry.

PEOPLE MET

Thursday the 2nd of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
12:00-12:30	Opening session with top management: Presentation of Sharjah University challenges	Chancellor, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Vice Chancellor for accreditation, and Dean of College of Law (four people met)
12:30-13:00	Campus visit	First part: main building (amphitheatre, cafeteria...), and Law college Male building (classrooms, labs...)
14:00-15:00	Institutional meeting Presentation of the College of Law, its programmes	Dean of the Faculty of Law, Director of Studies, Directors of the six courses assessed (five people met)
15:10-16:10	Quality assurance	Staff involved in quality assurance and management. Evaluation & Academic Accreditation representatives. (Two people meet),
16:10-17:30	Academic and non-academic partners	Executive department of Francophonie relations (Government of Sharjah), Director of Alliance française, representatives of the Supreme Legislation Committee, Co-head of dispute resolution at Al Tamimi & Cie law firm and legal consultations, Partner at Al Rasheed & partners law firm and legal consultation (Seven people met)

Friday the 3rd of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00–09:00	Bachelor's programme managers	Dean of the college of Law, Head of training; three for Private Law and one for Public Law (five people met).
09:00–10:00	Bachelor's Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course: tenured, contract and part-time lecturers from various disciplines, not including those responsible for the degree (seven people met)
10:10–11:10	Bachelor's students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the Bachelor in terms of gender, nationality, year of studies, learning arrangements, etc. (eight people met)
Debriefing (Bachelor)		
13:00-14:00	Master Air and Space Law programme managers	Heads of training (two people met).
14:00–15:00	Master Air and Space Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course (four people met)
15:10–16:10	Master Air and Space Law Students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (four people met)
Debriefing (Master Air and Space Law)		

Monday the 6th of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00-09:30	Master and PhD Public Law programme managers	Heads of training and administrative secretaries (four people met).
09:40–11:00	Master and PhD Public Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course, not including those responsible for the degree (eight people met)
11:10–12:00	Master Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program. (six people met)
12:00–12:45	PhD Public Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (six people met)
14:00-15:00	Campus Visit	Second part. Documentary resources
15:00-16:00	Alumni	Five people met graduated from the different programmes evaluated
Debriefing (Master and PhD Public Law)		

Tuesday the 7th of May, 2024

Time	Session	Audience
08:00-09:30	Master and PhD Private Law programme managers (Q&A, no presentation)	Heads of training and administrative secretaries (five people met).
09:40–11:00	Master and PhD Private Law Teaching staff	Representative panel of teaching and research staff in the course, not including those responsible for the degree (eight people met)
11:10–12:00	Master Private Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (four people met).
12:00–12:45	PhD Private Law students	Meeting with a representative panel of students from the program (five people met).
Debriefing (Master and PhD Private Law)		
14:00-15:00	Campus Visit	Third part. Law college Female building (classrooms, labs...)
15:00-16:00	Closing session (final questions/answers on the 6 diplomas, no feedback)	Dean of the Faculty of Law + degree directors

III. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

1 – PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The Master's programme in Air and Space Law (MASL) was created in 2018 to meet the needs of the UAE aviation sector and support the emerging UAE space sector. Offered by the University of Sharjah, it is unique in its field within the UAE and the region. The University's strategy is to make this master's degree a flagship programme in the Arab countries for the teaching of air and space law. The aim is to foster the development of aviation and space law and policy through research and teaching. To achieve this objective, the University of Sharjah implements an adapted professor recruitment policy and supports research in air and space law.

The MASL programme imparts comprehensive knowledge of air and space Law, preparing students for roles in the aerospace industry and in air and space regulation. Courses are taught in English by scholars with expertise and doctoral degrees in research in air and space law. The curriculum covers traditional subjects, providing a solid knowledge base that enables students to critically analyse jurisprudence, legislative trends, and various judicial and legal systems related to air and space. Students take a set of required courses and can specialise with elective courses in either air law or space law, or both.

The programme mainly attracts students who are already employed. Although the master's programme is designed to last two years, many students extend their studies over three, four, or even five years due to their part-time status and the necessity to publish an article to graduate.

2 - PRESENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME'S SELF-EVALUATION APPROACH

The self-evaluation approach is the result of a joint effort between the Academic Accreditation Department of the University of Sharjah and the faculty members of the College of Law. The Academic Accreditation Department collected and provided the relevant data. Based on this data, the College of Law's academic team prepared the self-evaluation report, which was subsequently reviewed by the Academic Accreditation Department. The result is a comprehensive self-assessment report, supplemented by numerous appendices that offer a wealth of objective information.

IV. EVALUATION REPORT

1- TRAINING POLICY AND CHARACTERISATION

The Master's programme is consistent with the University of Sharjah's Training Strategy and complements related bachelor's and master's courses in public international law and international private law. It holds particularly relevance in the United Arab Emirates' national political and economic context.

Establishing a master's programme in Air and Space Law (MASL) in the UAE is relevant given the local aviation ecosystem. The UAE hosts three international airports, including one in Sharjah, and is home to major airlines such as Emirates, Etihad, Air Arabia, and Flydubai. Additionally, the UAE's ambitious space exploration initiatives further justify for such a specialised academic programme.

The MASL programme is designed with a comprehensive approach that covers all pertinent aspects of air and space law. Nevertheless, it should also integrate broader societal concerns, including sustainable development in relation to air and space activities. The MASL curriculum is developed in conjunction with related bachelor's courses. Bachelor's students are introduced to air and space law within the international public law course. The MASL serves as a bridge to further studies, offering a strong foundation for a PhD programme in air and space law, which is planned to open in the future.

The MASL programme would significantly benefit from incorporating faculty and student mobilities.

The limited international student mobility within the MASL programme is primarily due to the fact that most students are working professionals. However, establishing a mobility programme with foreign universities that offers specialised training in air and space law could be advantageous. The experience attempted with a MASL student who wanted to take a course at Leiden University should be repeated. Developing partnerships with foreign universities like Leiden University, McGill University, Cologne University, Nebraska University, Paris-Saclay University or Luxemburg University could greatly enhance the curriculum, broaden research opportunities, and expand the academic network for both students and faculty. Additionally, establishing connections with local and foreign universities specialising in civil aviation careers, military defence academies, and space sciences would further enrich the programme.

The study programme benefits from research links that are coherent with its outcomes. Faculty members are engaged in specialised research activities.

The UoS is committed to advancing research in air and space law, supported by a dedicated team of professors. A research partnership between the professors of air and space law at the University of Sharjah and the Sharjah Academy of Astronomy, Space Sciences & Technology could offer significant benefits. These collaborations can lead to joint research projects, and to the development of specialised courses that cater to the emerging needs of the space sector.

The MASL programme offers a system to train students through various research opportunities, with the process of writing a master's thesis. However, the requirement for students to publish an article in a journal referenced before completing their Master's degree is both a significant strength and a potential weakness of the programme. The high-difficulty of this requirement means that few students might succeed in fulfilling it.

The study programme maintains links with the socio-economic world, but these links could be strengthened.

The air law courses offered are well aligned with the needs of the aviation sector, comprehensively covering the discipline from public and private international law perspectives. This holistic approach ensures that students receive a well-rounded education that prepares them for various legal challenges and opportunities within the aviation industry. Nevertheless, incorporating some courses focused on specific needs of the space sector would be beneficial to enhance the curriculum further.

The MASL has formed partnerships with key institutions to enhance its educational and professional offerings. Collaborations include the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and the DIFC Courts of space law. An agreement is currently being negotiated with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre. These partnerships facilitate ongoing knowledge exchange through lectures, workshops, and internships.

Conclusion

The Master's programme in Air and Space Law represents a significant step forward in aligning with the institution's training strategy while addressing the needs of the contemporary aviation and space sectors. The programme's strategic location and collaborations with key industry and academic partners enhance its potential to become a regional training hub. Furthermore, by embracing an interdisciplinary approach and emphasizing sustainability and ethical practices, the MASL programme prepares students for the complexities of the field. The internationalisation of the program is ensured by the diversity of professors and students from several countries. It could be reinforced by student mobility during training and the reception of specialised

foreign professors. Links with the socio-economic world are gradually being structured with a major partner: the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA). These links could be further strengthened given the number of key aviation and space players established in Dubai and the rest of the country. The programme would also benefit from further development of its academic and research partnerships with institutions that have programmes in air and space law.

2 – PEDAGOGICAL ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The study programme's structure and teaching methods are tailored to target skills, yet there is room for improvement.

The learning outcomes are reinforced by teaching methods and assessments that align with both a curriculum-based and a skill-based approaches. The programme's objectives regarding the knowledge and skills to be acquired are clearly outlined in the programme specifications and the course syllabi.

The format of the MASL exams and the questions roughly align with those in Masters' programmes in air and space law offered in America or Europe. However, the depth of responses tends to be quite general. Several reasons contribute to this: 1) the selected students may not consistently meet high academic standards; 2) the presence of non-lawyer students necessitates adjusting teaching expectations; 3) the level of course content is not high enough to meet international standards. To attain international standards, it is advisable to incrementally raise the expectations for exam answers. Additionally, increasing the difficulty of exams could further enhance the rigor of assessment.

The programme offers foundational courses for non-law graduates to ensure all students have a solid legal grounding. Students can customise their focus within the programme, selecting specialisations in air law, space law, or a combination, and further specifying into public or private sectors. Bridges between air law and space law study areas facilitate seamless transitions for students shifting their focus.

However, there is currently an imbalance between the number of air law and space law courses: eight courses are available in air law, only two in space law. As part of the new accreditation process, two additional space law courses will be introduced to rectify this disparity. To enhance programme flexibility, integrating at least one of these new space law courses into the elective options would be beneficial.

The study programme diversifies its teaching practices to foster student success.

It combines theoretical courses, case studies on current legal cases, and guest lectures from industry experts. Professional visits are organised, such as those to the GCAA and the Space Law Court. Additionally, the university supports and funds student participation in international moot court competitions. The MASL's participation in the international air law moot court held in Moscow in 2023 marks a significant initial step. However, the programme's administration should now consider regular participation in the two major moot court competitions in the field: the Leiden-Sarin International Air Law Moot Court Competition and the Manfred Lachs Space Law Moot Court Competition. To further enhance the educational experience for MASL students, the programme should incorporate more professional on-site visits, serious games, design offices, or hackathons.

The MASL programme currently lacks courses fully devoted to other disciplines such as aeronautical engineering, space sciences, air transport economics, or space policy. These interdisciplinary courses are crucial as they provide a comprehensive understanding of the context within which air and space law operates. Including courses on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in legal research and practice within the curriculum would also be beneficial. The MASL programme utilises a variety of teaching environments and a flexible hybrid learning model, allowing students with special circumstances to attend classes online.

This is the only master's degree in law taught in English at the UoS.

This distinctive feature is advantageous for attracting international students and preparing them to work in an international environment where English is the main working language in the fields of air and space law. Furthermore, the University offers French language courses through the Centre of Francophonie. French is also widely used in the air and space sector, particularly within international organisations such as the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the European Space Agency (ESA), as well as in the aeronautics and space industries where French companies are significantly present.

The study programme content of the MASL is well-aligned with the needs of the socio-economic sector and lifelong learning, although the internship component is quiet brief.

Courses incorporate practical elements that equip students with skills to address real-world issues in sectors such as the judiciary and public prosecution. The current internship requirement is only 40 hours, but since all students work alongside their studies, many can develop their practical skills within the framework of their existing employment. However, this internship cannot be part of their employment in order to ensure the acquisition of

new practical skills specific to air and space law. The programme maintains strong collaborative relationship with organisations such as the GCAA, and the Space Law Court, among others, to provide internships that meet educational and professional standards. Expanding this network to include other key players in the air or space sectors could further enhance the internship programme. Publishing a list of available internships and the positions held by alumni would serve as a tangible demonstration of the programme's effectiveness in preparing students for the workforce.

To the extent that the courses are scheduled at the end of the day or on weekends, making the programme compatible with professional activities. The flexible structure, allowing the programme to be spread over several years, also caters to students returning to their studies after a professional work. Interviews with alumni have revealed that not all professors are well-acquainted with the specific professional context in which future graduates will work. As a result, they sometimes struggle to provide relevant career advice tailored to the aviation and space sectors. Establishing a closer connection between current students and the alumni community could help bridge this gap.

Conclusion

While the Master's programme in Air and Space Law is well-structured and provides a solid foundation in both air and space law, some enhancements could further improve its effectiveness with the introduction of more specific courses. The upcoming addition of two new space law courses in the next accreditation cycle represents a positive development. Yet, deeper integration of space law throughout the curriculum and expanded partnerships with industry stakeholders could better equip students with pertinent skills. Extending the internship duration beyond its current 40-hour format would provide students with more substantial practical experiences.

3 – ATTRACTIVENESS, PERFORMANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

The programme's attractiveness is not fully commensurate with its interest and quality. Its visibility could be enhanced by more effective communication.

The number of applications per year remains low. This is due to the highly specific nature of the programme and the registration fees, which are higher than those for competing programmes in other countries. However, communication also highlights that two scholarships are offered each year by the GCAA. The master's web page could be more comprehensive and attractive by providing job opportunities after graduation and examples of internships.

Student success is monitored, but the number of graduate students remains low.

The programme uses several indicators to track student success. Success rates and the effectiveness of support measures are made public, maintaining transparency and accountability in the programme's operations. The master's programme opened its first class in 2018. To date, out of the classes from 2018 to 2020, only 6 students have graduated, 6 have dropped out and 33 students are still studying. Added to this number are the 34 students enrolled in 2021 and 2022. The graduation rate is therefore low, despite the serious supervision provided by the teachers. This raises questions about the abilities of the candidates enrolled.

This indicates that students are extending their studies over three, four, or even five years, whereas typically, a master's programme is designed to last two years. This extended duration is attributed to three main factors: 1) many students are working alongside their studies and can only dedicate part of their time to the master and they are allowed to be enrolled part-time; 2) the programme admits students from non-legal backgrounds who may require additional time to acclimate to the legal aspects of the curriculum; 3) the academic level of students admitted into the programme might not be consistently high, potentially leading to longer periods needed to meet graduation requirements. To ensure the programme remains efficient and effective, it would be prudent for the College of law to monitor and limit the duration of study to a reasonable timeframe, ideally between two to four years. This approach would help maintain academic rigor and programme attractiveness.

The study programme also analyses its graduates' job-market integration and further studies in relation to its objectives and the job market.

Various surveys are employed to collect comprehensive feedback from current students and alumni. Despite these efforts, it is not clear from meetings with alumni that they receive evaluation and professional situation questionnaires.

Conclusion

While the Master's programme in Air and Space Law at the University of Sharjah has significant strengths, there are several areas where improvements could be made to enhance its attractiveness, performance, and

relevance. The programme's visibility can be significantly enhanced by revamping marketing strategies. Direct promotion to the University of Sharjah's Bachelor's students could help in recruiting more applicants.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this programme, as measured by the number of graduate students, is questionable. The low number of graduates is partly explained by the origin of the students: those who do not come from a legal background spend a year or more catching up in certain fundamental disciplines. Secondly, most of them are part-time students and the programme, designed to last two years, generally takes 4 years. Finally, the requirement to publish an article in a ranked journal is clearly too demanding. It is essential to identify the reason of this low number of graduate students and to monitor and limit the duration of study to a reasonable timeframe, ideally between two to four years. A more in-depth study on the correlation between student success and their background must be carried out.

The programme should establish a more systematic approach to tracking the integration of its graduates into the job market. Establishing an alumni network could significantly enhance the experiences of current and future students by fostering a community of professionals within the aviation and space sectors.

4 – ACADEMIC PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

The programme is managed and implemented by a formally identified teaching team with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

However, it is essential to clearly communicate the academic qualifications and scientific credentials of the professors, as well as the practical expertise of professional practitioners involved in the programme. Currently, their participation is organised through regular invitations to new experts for lectures and workshops. It would be advisable to gradually increase their participation as well as the involvement of alumni in the MASL's programme.

The study programme has the resources required to achieve its objectives, both in terms of the quantity and quality of staff and material resources.

Overall, the human resources policies are designed to meet the diverse and specialised needs of the air and space law programme, ensuring that the faculty and administrative support staff are well-equipped to provide a high-quality educational experience. The recruitment of seven fully or partially specialised professors and the encouragement of publication in air and space law are strong points of the University's policy to support training and research in these disciplines.

The administrative staff dedicated to the programme, as along with the services of the College of Law and the University, ensures that the MASL operates smoothly.

The library plays a pivotal role, offering extensive support and resources, including specialised sessions to aid students' research projects. The opening hours and check-out policies are satisfactory. The online catalogue is excellent, and the acquisition policy is very dynamic. Given that not all journals on air and space law are available online. The university should consider securing access to publications such as the "McGill University's Annals of Air and Space Law" or the Proceedings of the International Institute of Space Law (IISL) colloquiums.

Regular workshops and seminars enhance faculty skills in pedagogy and technology integration, contributing to dynamic and effective teaching strategies. Professors are encouraged to publish in A-tier journals, ensuring the research meets high academic standards. At the time of the evaluation visit, the team had produced around ten publications in air and space law, covering contemporary and critical issues such as aviation liability law, the militarisation of outer space, and space debris. It is also commendable to observe the diversity among the academic staff dedicated to the MASL which includes professors of American, Australian, Hungarian, Indian, and Pakistani nationalities. Enhancing the local teaching team by including some visiting professors who are renowned specialists in air and space law from around the world could significantly boost the programme's visibility and reputation. This strategy would also potentially increase the programme's appeal internationally.

The University strongly supports the international mobility of its professors, providing funding for research stays abroad. Faculty members benefit from a well-defined career progression plan that rewards their involvement in research, teaching, and administrative roles.

The study programme defines an evaluation process that facilitates its development through continuous improvement.

The university's commitment to incorporating student feedback into programme development is commendable. Further enhancement can be achieved by integrating real-time feedback tools, which would allow for more immediate adjustments and interventions. Expanding this to include more regular input from industry partners and alumni could provide additional perspectives. Currently, the College of Law's Advisory Council is used to enhance the internal evaluation of its study programmes, including the MASL. This is achieved through participation in this Advisory Council of prominent figures from various legal, governmental, and aviation

sectors, including directors and counsellors from the GCAA, Public Prosecution, Federal Court of Appeal, Police Academy, and International Arbitration Centres as well as representatives from legal departments of the government, legal firms, and international law departments. Expanding this group to include more industry experts, especially from the aerospace sector, could provide more targeted insights.

The programme is subject to regular and periodic external evaluation. The University of Sharjah's programme benefits from full licensure and accreditation by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) of the UAE's Ministry of Education, undergoing a thorough external evaluation every five years.

The study programme is based on a quality and ethics-based approach.

Students are admitted based on their scores and so far, no candidate has been rejected. However, there are no longer interviews for entry into the master's programme. Conducting interviews can better understand candidates' motivations, verify their language skills and knowledge, and address their questions and concerns. Interviews would help to better target candidates, forming more coherent and unified classes. Additionally, the process for admitting candidates from non-law backgrounds could be further clarified, and their success in graduating should be tracked.

The study programme includes training in research integrity and ethics. Strict rules against academic misconduct are enforced, with serious penalties for violations. The university regularly conducts workshops on research integrity and ethics in both Arabic and English, aimed at both students and faculty. Additionally, the mandatory course on Legal Research and Legal Writing integrates extensive training in research integrity, requiring students to proficiently use research tools and address ethical issues. Introducing elements that explain how students can utilise artificial intelligence (AI) systems in their studies to uphold scientific research integrity standards would be highly beneficial. However, a review of students' work indicates that not all have acquired the basic rules for referencing sources.

Conclusion

The programme is executed by a specialised teaching team. Resources for the programme are adequately provided, with a notable number of specialised faculty members who exceed global comparative figures. Faculty are encouraged and supported in publishing research. The programme's management includes feedback mechanisms from students, and external evaluations are conducted regularly, maintaining adherence to accreditation standards and fostering continuous improvement. Admissions processes are streamlined and transparent, although reintroducing interviews could enhance candidate assessment and better gauge candidate suitability and motivation.

V. CONCLUSION

The Master of Air and Space Law (MASL) is among the few global master's programmes encompassing both air and space law disciplines, and it stands as the sole programme of this specialised education in the UAE and the Arab region. Its establishment aligns with the UAE's ambition in the aviation and space sectors. The MASL programme is positioned to leverage the UAE's advanced airport infrastructures, world-class airlines, and an emerging yet ambitious space industry. It is essential for the programme's management to expand partnerships within this ecosystem. Furthermore, the University should support the development of strategic alliances with institutions specialising in air and space law or those educating experts in civil aviation, aeronautics, and space.

While the programme's air law content is well-developed, the offerings in space law are currently too limited and general to provide high-level specialisation. The programme also could benefit from incorporating greater interdisciplinarity to adequately reflect the diverse disciplines connected to aviation and space. The dedicated teaching team is expanding its specialisation in air and space law, with strong encouragement and support from the University for their research and professional development.

However, the programme currently faces challenges in attracting a sufficient number of applicants, which limits the ability to select only the most qualified candidates. There is a critical need to enhance the visibility of the relatively unknown fields of air and space law, as well as to promote the programme itself. Boosting international mobility for both students and faculty, and attracting internationally renowned professors specialising in these areas, could significantly enhance the programme's reputation and appeal. This would also ensure a better graduation rate.

STRENGTHS

- Alignment of the master programme with a strong ecosystem and national strategy to make the UAE a leading country in aviation and space.
- Robust teaching team dedicated to the master's degree.
- Interdisciplinary nature of the students composition (law-students and non-law-students), which offers students from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to learn how to work together to build the future of the air and space sectors in a spirit of cooperation and understanding.

WEAKNESSES

- A low number of graduate students due to a duration of study too high linked to a low number of applications, making it impossible to select the best students.
- The contents are not focussing enough on transdisciplinary courses and specific courses to air and space law.
- Insufficient links with strategic partnerships in Air and Space.
- Limited international mobility among students or professors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

The College of law should monitor and possibly limit the duration of study to a reasonable timeframe, ideally between two to four years, to maintain academic rigor and programme attractiveness while also supporting students in completing their degrees in a timely manner. Moreover, clear communication about the career paths and roles that graduates are prepared for, including testimonials from alumni, could illustrate its accessibility and relevance beyond traditionally perceived scientific or engineering prerequisites. The creation of an association bringing together MASL students and alumni would strengthen the professional network as well as the visibility of the programme.

Recommendation 2

The introduction of more transdisciplinary courses would allow students to better understand the legal implications of certain specific technical or economic problems. Similarly, incorporating courses on sustainable aviation and space, which also cover airport-related issues, would be highly beneficial. This course should address environmental impacts associated with space activities, such as debris, light pollution, and electromagnetic pollution. Additionally, it should illustrate how satellites, especially remote sensing satellites, are invaluable tools for environmental protection. AI courses are also important for this master's programme as AI is already being used to streamline various legal processes, from document analysis and legal research to more

complex tasks like predicting litigation outcomes. These courses could also cover the ethical considerations and regulatory issues surrounding AI in law, preparing students to navigate these critical aspects responsibly.

Incorporating specific elements of contract law that are unique to the space industry or introducing courses on space-originated data would address the legal aspects related to acquiring, using, and sharing data obtained from space-based technologies. These courses would be particularly relevant as space-originated data plays an increasingly vital role in global communications, Earth observation, and other applications.

Recommendation 3

Strategic partnerships should be strengthened with the air and space sectors as well as with national and international academic institutions related to the master's degree. While the partnership with the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and the DIFC Courts of space law is crucial for the MASL programme, it is also important to establish structured partnerships with other key players in the UAE's aviation sector such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, Flydubai, and Air Arabia, as well as the main national airports: Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport, and Sharjah International Airport. Regarding space law, additional partnerships could be signed with the UAE Space Agency and the UAE Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) which is responsible for orbit-spectrum regulation. Collaborations with satellite companies or satellite TV providers operating in the UAE, such as Yahsat (Al Yah Satellite Communications Company) and the Dubai-based MBC Group, which manages a network of satellite television channels, would also be valuable.

Recommendation 4

Encouraging inbound and outbound international mobility for both students and faculty is crucial to enriching the Master's programme. The collaborations with foreign professors or experts in aviation and space law can extend to co-supervision of student master theses. This arrangement allows faculty members from partner institutions to jointly oversee research projects, providing diverse expert insights that elevate the academic rigor and relevance of students' work.

VI. COMMENTS OF THE INSTITUTION



University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates
College of Law

Response to Recommendations for Accreditation of the Master in Air and Space Law (MASL)

Submitted to
Europe and International Department
French High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (HCERES)

05-09-2024


Document History

Date	Action
2 to 7 May 2024	HCERES Site Visit to UoS Campus
31 July 2024	HCERES Evaluation Report Sent to UoS
5 September 2024	UoS Response sent to HCERES

In the Name of the College of Law, University of Sharjah

College Dean:

Name: Professor Adnan Sirhan

Signature: 

Stamp:



Introduction

The College of Law at the University of Sharjah would like to thank the HCRES members for their great efforts, continuous support, and their valuable recommendations provided to the College regarding the accreditation request of its six academic programmes. The college has the honor to submit its response to these recommendations.

The concerned six programmes:

1. Bachelor of Law in English
2. Master in Air and Space Law
3. Master in Private Law
4. Master in Public Law
5. Doctor of Philosophy in Private Law
6. Doctor of Philosophy in Public Law

Master in Air and Space Law (MASL)

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The College of law should monitor and possibly limit the duration of study to a reasonable timeframe, ideally between two to four years, to maintain academic rigor and programme attractiveness while also supporting students in completing their degrees in a timely manner. Moreover, clear communication about the career paths and roles that graduates are prepared for, including testimonials from alumni, could illustrate its accessibility and relevance beyond traditionally perceived scientific or engineering prerequisites. The creation of an association bringing together MASL students and alumni would strengthen the professional network as well as the visibility of the programme.

UoS Response:

The study duration for our programmes is in alignment with the University of Sharjah (UoS) policy, which allows for a duration of 4 to 8 semesters, according to the new regulations, students who exceed this time will be dismissed from the programme and will not be allowed to return. This timeframe is designed to ensure that students can maintain academic rigor while also completing their degrees in a reasonable period. Additionally, since most students come from disciplines other than law, it takes them more time to write a thesis in this field. Additionally, most students of MASL are part-time students who are not allowed to register more than two courses (six credit hours) per semester as shown in the table below.

	Minimum Credit Hours/Semester	Maximum Credit Hours/Semester
Master's Full-Time	9	12
Master's Part-Time	3	<9

Furthermore, we are actively enhancing our engagement with students and alumni. We recently organized an event in collaboration with the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), where our alumni participated alongside captains from the GCAA. This event provided a platform for our students to gain insights into potential career paths and showcased the versatility of our graduates in various professional roles.

The UoS has a dedicated Alumni department that maintains regular contact with our graduates. Additionally, the College of Law consistently invites alumni to all our events, ensuring that they remain connected to the university community and can contribute to the ongoing development of our programmes. This strong network not only supports our graduates in their careers but also enhances the visibility and relevance of our programmes.

Recommendation 2

The introduction of more transdisciplinary courses would allow students to better understand the legal implications of certain specific technical or economic problems. Similarly, incorporating courses on sustainable aviation and space, which also cover airport-related issues, would be highly beneficial. This course should address environmental impacts associated with space activities, such as debris, light pollution, and electromagnetic pollution. Additionally, it should illustrate how satellites, especially remote sensing satellites, are invaluable tools for environmental protection. AI courses are also important for this master's programme as AI is already being used to streamline various legal processes, from document analysis and legal research to more complex tasks like predicting litigation outcomes. These courses could also cover the ethical considerations and regulatory issues surrounding AI in law, preparing students to navigate these critical aspects responsibly. Incorporating specific elements of contract law that are unique to the space industry or introducing courses on space-originated data would address the legal aspects related to acquiring, using, and sharing data obtained from space-based technologies. These courses would be particularly relevant as space-originated data plays an increasingly vital role in global communications, Earth observation, and other applications.

UoS Response:

In response to the evolving needs of our students and the legal profession, the College of Law has introduced two new courses as part of our latest accreditation: Automation and Aerospace Law and Outer Space Sustainability: Issues of Safety and Security. These courses are designed to equip our students with the specialized knowledge required to navigate the complex legal challenges associated with these fields.

Automation and Aerospace Law:

This course is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of automation on the aviation industry, particularly in terms of liability distribution among major aircraft manufacturers, insurers, and airlines. Students will explore how incidents related to automation have influenced products liability, aviation insurance, and private international air law. The course will also address the potential for regulatory and educational reforms to mitigate risks associated with automation complacency, aiming to reduce or eliminate such dangers. Additionally, the course will cover the legal regulation of artificial intelligence in the space sector, focusing on the protection of fundamental human rights and legislative approaches to AI in this context.

Outer Space Sustainability: Issues of Safety and Security:

This course addresses the environmental and legal challenges associated with space activities, including the management of space debris, light pollution, and electromagnetic pollution. It will explore how satellites, particularly remote sensing satellites, contribute to environmental protection. Students will gain insights into the legal aspects of acquiring, using, and sharing space-originated data, which is increasingly crucial for global communications, Earth observation, and other applications. The course also covers the ethical considerations and regulatory frameworks necessary for ensuring the sustainability of outer space activities.

These courses reflect our commitment to providing our students with a forward-thinking education that prepares them to address the legal implications of emerging technologies and industries. By integrating these topics into our curriculum, we aim to equip our graduates with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in a rapidly evolving legal landscape.

Recommendation 3

Strategic partnerships should be strengthened with the air and space sectors as well as with national and international academic institutions related to the master's degree. While the partnership with the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and the DIFC Courts of space law is crucial for the MASL programme, it is also important to establish structured partnerships with other key players in the UAE's aviation sector such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, Flydubai, and Air Arabia, as well as the main national airports: Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport, and Sharjah International Airport. Regarding space law, additional partnerships could be signed with the UAE Space Agency and the UAE Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) which is responsible for orbit-spectrum regulation. Collaborations with satellite companies or satellite TV providers operating in the UAE, such as Yahsat (Al Yah Satellite Communications Company) and the Dubai-based MBC Group, which manages a network of satellite television channels, would also be valuable.

UoS Response:

The College of Law at the University of Sharjah (UoS) is actively pursuing the establishment of several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with significant entities in both the aviation and space sectors. These partnerships will include prominent organizations such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, Flydubai, and Air Arabia, as well as major national airports like Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport, and Sharjah International Airport. These collaborations aim to enhance our students' learning experiences by providing them with direct access to industry expertise and real-world applications of their studies.

Regarding space law, we are also exploring partnerships with the national authorities responsible for orbit-spectrum regulation. Additionally, the college is considering collaboration with satellite companies in UAE and the region, which are involved in satellite communications and broadcasting.

Moreover, the UoS has already signed significant MoUs with the University of Luxembourg ([Appendix 01](#)), which offers a master's programme in space law. This partnership not only broadens the academic opportunities for our students but also facilitates collaborative research and exchange programmes that will enrich the educational experience within our MASL programme. Also, we are currently in contact with the Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center to finalize a cooperation agreement with them.

These strategic partnerships are central to our long-term vision of positioning the College of Law as a leader in legal education in the fields of aviation and space law, both nationally and internationally. We believe that these collaborations will greatly benefit our students and faculty, fostering an environment of innovation and excellence.

Recommendation 4

Encouraging inbound and outbound international mobility for both students and faculty is crucial to enriching the Master's programme. The collaborations with foreign professors or experts in aviation and space law can extend to co-supervision of student master theses. This arrangement allows faculty members from partner institutions to jointly oversee research projects, providing diverse expert insights that elevate the academic rigor and relevance of students' work.

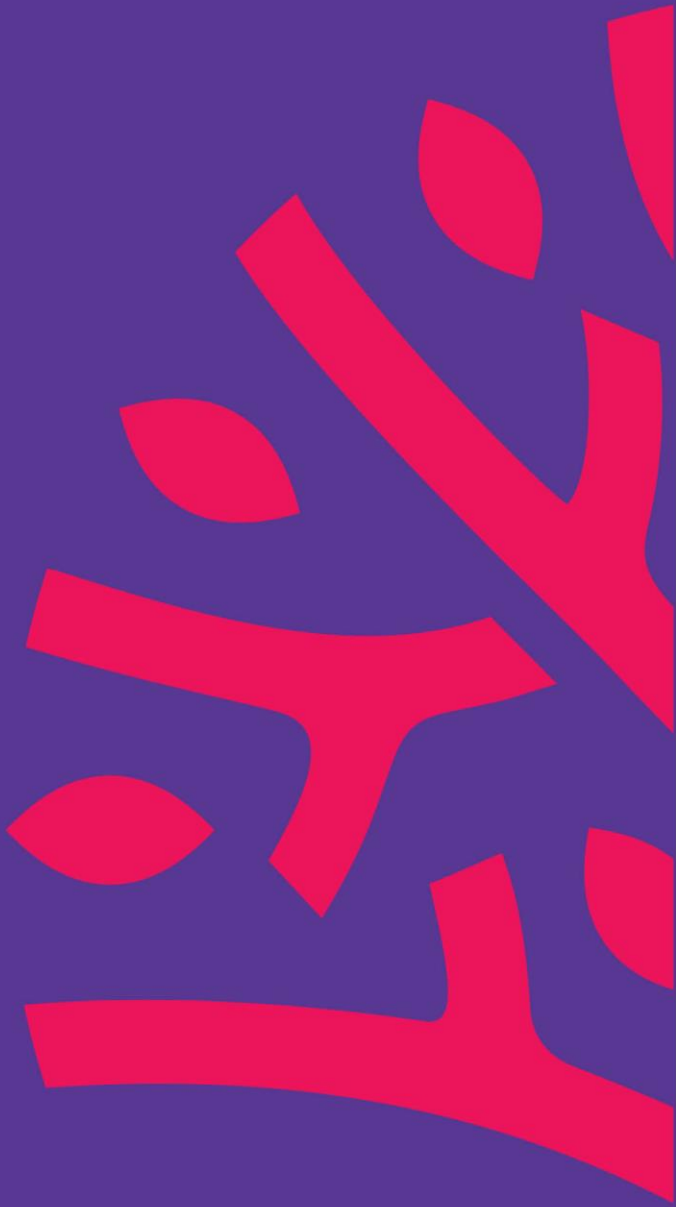
UoS Response:

At the University of Sharjah (UoS), we fully recognize the importance of international mobility for both students and faculty in enriching our Master's programme. UoS has a dedicated Exchange Department that actively encourages and facilitates opportunities for our students to study abroad for one semester. This initiative is designed to broaden their academic and cultural horizons, providing them with unique experiences that complement their studies at UoS.

In addition, we are currently preparing a comprehensive list of esteemed professors in aviation law and space law who will be invited to join our programme as co-supervisors for master's students' theses. This collaboration will allow students to benefit from diverse expert insights, ensuring that their research is both academically rigorous and highly relevant to current industry practices.

Furthermore, we strongly encourage our faculty members to reach out to professors from our partner institutions to explore joint research projects. UoS places a high value on international collaboration, and we actively support our professors in pursuing research initiatives with colleagues from overseas. These joint projects not only enhance the research output of our faculty but also contribute to the global exchange of knowledge and ideas.

By fostering these collaborations and promoting international mobility, we aim to elevate the academic quality and global relevance of our Master's programme, ensuring that our students and faculty are well-prepared to contribute to the evolving fields of aviation and space law.



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International evaluation and accreditation

ACCREDITATION DECISION

Master in Air and Space Law

University of Sharjah
College of Law

Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

September 2024

SCOPE OF THE ACCREDITATION GRANTED BY HCÉRES

HCÉRES has based its evaluation process on a set of objectives that study programmes must pursue to ensure recognised quality within France and Europe. These objectives are divided up into four accreditation criteria.

The Accreditation Commission issues an opinion about the accreditation of the study programme after examining the file. The Hcéres President takes the decision based on the Commission's opinion and the final evaluation report of the programme. This accreditation decision, taken in plenary session, is the result of a collegial and reasoned process.

The decision issued by Hcéres regarding the accreditation of the study programme corresponds to the awarding of a label to the evaluated entity.

This decision is independent of the accreditations carried out by the French State and therefore does not entail recognition in France of the institution or the diplomas issued by it.

Decision No. EI-2024-41 on the accreditation of the Master in Air and Space Law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The President of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education,

Considering the Research Code, in particular Articles L. 114-3-1 to L. 114-3-6;

Considering the Board's deliberation of 29th September 2022 on the accreditation criteria for international study programmes (except doctorates/PhDs);

Considering the Decision No. 2023-9 of 16th March 2023 on the international accreditation procedure of the High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education;

Considering the agreement DEI_2023_CONV27 of 21st December 2023 for the evaluation/accreditation of the Master in Air and Space Law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates;

Considering the opinion issued by the Accreditation Commission on 27th September 2024;

Decides:

Article 1

Noting that the Master in Air and Space Law delivered by the University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates meets the four accreditation criteria, voted by the Board of the High Council on 29th September 2022, as follows:

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 1: TEACHING POLICY AND CHARACTERISATION

The master's programme in air and space law represents a significant step forward in aligning the institution's training strategy with the needs of today's aviation and space sectors. The programme's strategic location and collaborations with key industrial and academic partners strengthen its potential to become a regional training centre. In addition, the MASL programme prepares students for the complexities of the field by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and focusing on sustainability and ethical practices. The internationalisation of the programme is ensured by the diversity of professors and students from several countries. It could be strengthened by student mobility during the course and by hosting specialist foreign lecturers. Links with the socio-economic world are gradually being established with an important partner: the General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA). These links could be further strengthened given the number of key aviation and space players based in Dubai and the rest of the country. The programme would also benefit from further developing its academic and research partnerships with institutions with programmes in aviation and space law.

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 2: THE PEDAGOGICAL ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Although the Master's programme in Air and Space Law is well structured and provides a solid foundation in air and space law, some improvements could enhance its effectiveness through the introduction of more specific courses. The forthcoming addition of two new space law courses in the next accreditation cycle is a positive development. However, further integration of space law across the curriculum and broader partnerships with industry could provide students with more relevant skills. Extending the duration of the work placement beyond the current 40 hours would enable students to gain more substantial practical experience.

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 3: ATTRACTIVENESS, PERFORMANCE AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY PROGRAMME

Although there are considerable strengths in the Master of Air and Space Law programme at the University of Sharjah, improvements could be made in a number of areas to enhance its attractiveness, performance and relevance. The visibility of the programme can be significantly improved by reorganising the marketing strategies. Direct promotion to undergraduate students at the University of Sharjah could help to attract more applicants.

The effectiveness of the programme, as measured by the number of students graduating, is questionable. The low number of graduates is partly explained by the background of the students: those who do not come from a legal background spend a year or more catching up in certain basic disciplines. Secondly, most of them are part-time students and the programme, which is designed to last two years, generally takes four years. Finally, the requirement to publish an article in a recognised journal is clearly too demanding. It is essential to identify the reasons for this low number of PhD students and to control and limit the duration of the programme to a reasonable period, ideally between two and four years. A more in-depth study of the correlation between student success and their course should be undertaken. The programme should introduce a more systematic approach to monitoring the integration of its graduates into the labour market. The establishment of an alumni network could greatly enhance the experience of current and future students by fostering a community of professionals in the aerospace sector.

ACCREDITATION CRITERION 4: MANAGEMENT AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME

A team of specialized teachers delivers the programme. The resources for the programme are adequate, with a notable number of specialist teaching staff, which exceeds world comparative figures. Teachers are encouraged and supported to publish research. Programme management includes mechanisms for student feedback, and external evaluations are carried out regularly, meeting accreditation standards and encouraging continuous improvement. Admissions procedures are streamlined and transparent, although the reintroduction of interviews could improve the assessment of applicants and better gauge their suitability and motivation.

Article 2

The Master in Air and Space Law delivered by the University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, is accredited for a period of 5 years from the date of this decision.

Article 3

The decision is accompanied by the following recommendations and comments:

- The College of law should monitor and possibly limit the duration of study to a reasonable timeframe, ideally between two to four years, to maintain academic rigor and programme attractiveness while also supporting students in completing their degrees in a timely manner. Moreover, clear communication about the career paths and roles that graduates are prepared for, including testimonials from alumni, could illustrate its accessibility and relevance beyond traditionally perceived scientific or engineering prerequisites. The creation of an association bringing together MASL students and alumni would strengthen the professional network as well as the visibility of the programme.
- The introduction of more transdisciplinary courses would allow students to better understand the legal implications of certain specific technical or economic problems. Similarly, incorporating courses on sustainable aviation and space, which also cover airport-related issues, would be highly beneficial. This course should address environmental impacts associated with space activities, such as debris, light pollution, and electromagnetic pollution. Additionally, it should illustrate how satellites, especially remote sensing satellites, are invaluable tools for environmental protection. AI courses are also important for this master's programme as AI is already being used to streamline various legal processes, from document analysis and legal research to more complex tasks like predicting litigation outcomes. These courses could also cover the ethical considerations and regulatory issues surrounding AI in law, preparing students to navigate these critical aspects responsibly. Incorporating specific elements of contract law that are unique to the space industry or introducing courses on space-originated data would address the legal aspects related to acquiring, using, and sharing data obtained from space-based technologies. These courses would be particularly relevant as space-originated data plays an increasingly vital role in global communications, Earth observation, and other applications.
- Strategic partnerships should be strengthened with the air and space sectors as well as with national and international academic institutions related to the master's degree. While the partnership with the UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) and the DIFC Courts of space law is crucial for

the MASL programme, it is also important to established structured partnerships with other key players in the UAE's aviation sector such as Emirates, Etihad Airways, Flydubai, and Air Arabia, as well as the main national airports: Dubai International Airport, Abu Dhabi International Airport, and Sharjah International Airport. Regarding space law, additional partnerships could be signed with the UAE Space Agency and the UAE Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) which is responsible for orbit-spectrum regulation. Collaborations with satellite companies or satellite TV providers operating in the UAE, such as Yahsat (Al Yah Satellite Communications Company) and the Dubai-based MBC Group, which manages a network of satellite television channels, would also be valuable.

- Encouraging inbound and outbound international mobility for both students and faculty is crucial to enriching the Master's programme. The collaborations with foreign professors or experts in aviation and space law can extend to co-supervision of student master theses. This arrangement allows faculty members from partner institutions to jointly oversee research projects, providing diverse expert insights that elevate the academic rigor and relevance of students' work.

Article 4

This decision will be published on the Hcéres website.

Paris, 17th October 2024.

The acting President
signed
Stéphane Le Bouler



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