



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: Qatar University, College of Law

ADDRESS: Al Tarfa
Doha 2713
Qatar

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi

DATE OF VISIT: 15 October 2017

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION ON ACCREDITATION: Continued accreditation 14 December 2017

PART A - INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The University of Qatar (the University) is a publicly-funded university, founded in 1977. Its campus covers approximately eight square kilometres in the north of the capital city, Doha. The University is undergoing a period of considerable physical expansion, which includes a new library and a new College of Law building, which is scheduled for completion by 2020.

The College of Law is the only institution providing legal education in Qatar. It aspires to be the premier college of law in the region, in relation to the quality of its academic programmes, the achievements of its staff and graduates, and its service to the local and the international community.

The College of Law (the College) has its origins in the establishment of the University's Department of Legal Education in 1993. The Department was part of the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies until 2006 when it became a separate entity as the College of Law, one of eight colleges in the University. The College controls its own, devolved, budget within the University. The head of the College, the Dean, is assisted by an Associate Dean of Academics, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Studies, an Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, a Coordinator of Undergraduate Programmes, a Coordinator of Postgraduate Programmes and a Director of the Centre of Law and Development.

BAC accreditation applies only to the College of Law and not to the University as a whole.

2. Brief description of the current provision

The College has 1780 enrolled students, the vast majority of whom are on the bachelor's programme. The vast majority of students are Qatari and the majority of all students are female. Non-Qatari students are drawn largely from other Arab countries. There are 76 academic staff, of whom a minority are Qatari and a minority female, supported by 15 administrative staff. Enrolment takes place annually. Admission is very competitive and prospective law students must hold a high school award with a minimum average mark of 70 per cent. Admission procedures are handled centrally by Qatar University Admission and Registration Office.

The Bachelor of Laws (LLB) programme offers a wide range of modules, allowing for some specialisation, and has an emphasis on practical application. This reflects the importance the College places on ensuring the employability of its graduates. Although some teaching is in English, the majority is in Arabic. In addition, there are two Master of Laws (LLM) programmes, one in Private Law and the other in Public Law. Teaching on both these programmes is entirely in Arabic.

The academic staff come mainly from universities in the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA). They bring their international experience to bear in the design and delivery of the programmes and the College's approach to quality assurance. Academic staff are research-active and the College publishes an academic journal, the International Review of Law.

3. Inspection visit process

The inspection was conducted over half-a-day by one inspector. Helpful documentation was provided prior to the inspection visit. The inspector had meetings with the Dean and other senior academic and administrative staff and met around 20 students. Throughout, staff engaged with the inspection process most constructively, both in meetings and through the provision of additional documentation.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 22-23 May 2016

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector(s) during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

Since the initial accreditation inspection, student numbers have risen by some 36 per cent. In response, the College has strengthened its administrative structure with the creation of new boards and committees. This includes the Advisory Body, which comprises eminent persons such as the Minister of Justice and the President of the Court of Appeal, and the International Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee. Academic and administrative staffing has also been strengthened.

There have also been significant developments in the College's approach to its teaching. This is seen, particularly, through the notable emphasis on learning by experience, known as experiential learning. In the College, this manifests itself through experiential legal studies, the Law Clinic which deals with real-life cases, and mooted sessions which seek to replicate courtroom scenarios. Outside the College, experiential learning is facilitated through the mandatory externship programme, which places students in local organisations to expose them to current practice in the field.

2. Response to action points in last report

8.8 The College must reintroduce the policy requiring staff to produce lesson plans

This has been implemented. The policy is well thought-out and supported by comprehensive guidance. The lesson plans are detailed, deposited centrally and easily accessed.

9.8 The College must introduce internal moderation procedures and externality in the pre- and post-assessment stages

Internal pre- and post-assessment moderation procedures have been introduced. At the pre-assessment stage, the College's Academic Affairs Office encourages staff to exchange and discuss their proposed examination papers with colleagues within their subject specialisation before they are finalised and presented to students. Although this is very thorough and well-documented, it operates on a voluntary basis and it would benefit by being made a more formal requirement. Post-assessment moderation within the College is overseen by the Academic Affairs Office which evaluates, in considerable detail, students' marks and, more generally, student achievement of the intended learning outcomes.

Pre- and post-assessment moderation is also conducted, externally to the College, at the university level, where scrutiny of a course's assessment scheme may lead to requests to change the method of assessment. Post-assessment, scrutiny of student achievement may require the College to explain significant differences in student achievement within, and across, courses, and to make any changes deemed necessary.

In addition, each semester, the College selects two courses to be subjected to detailed scrutiny. This includes examining the congruence of the course intended learning outcomes with the programme intended learning outcomes. This is analysed both in terms of the appropriateness of the assessment diet and in the extent to which students' achievement satisfies the course and the programme intended learning outcomes.

While the process of pre- and post-assessment moderation, both internally and externally, is very thorough and well-documented, the College is examining the possibility of involving persons external to the University in pre- and post-assessment moderation.

13.3 The College of Law must provide students with an out-of-hours/emergency contact telephone number

This has been implemented.

23.1 The College should make rapid progress in filling the Law Librarian post

The College is planning to appoint a law librarian ahead of the scheduled opening of the new Law Library in 2020. As an interim measure, until the College has its own dedicated library, the role of ensuring the adequacy of the law provision is being undertaken by the Research Committee. Evidence was provided of regular updating of library stock which suggests that this is proving to be an effective stop-gap measure.

25.7 The annual review process and revalidation of programmes must make use of appropriate external input

This has been addressed. The College has created an Advisory Council which convenes once a year. It comprises eminent experts, including the Minister of Justice, the President of the Court of Appeal and two non-Qatari members. It held its first meeting in April 2017. One of its external members, a professor at Indiana University, USA, has been tasked with conducting a review of the College's policies and regulations. In addition, the College has invited a member of the International Association of Law Schools to undertake a review of the College's provision.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The College should set up a risk management committee and register that will permit a sharper focus on all aspects of risk management rather than those just related to the College's academic wellbeing.

As a first step, the Student Affairs Committee, under the supervision of the Assistant Dean, Student Affairs, has been given responsibility for proposing risk assessment procedures. The Assistant Dean will report initial proposals to the Dean, and the College Council of which she is a member. The Council will then decide how it will establish a more formal risk management process, which addresses the entirety of the College's operation.

It is recommended that the College ensures that all staff have a clear understanding of the University's revalidation policy.

The College's new five-year plan was drafted following widespread consultation. The Undergraduate Programme Coordinator chaired meetings with the College's five departments to discuss policies and procedures for revalidation of programmes and to consider other proposed developments. The subsequent proposal, endorsing the revalidation policy, was considered by the Academic Affairs Committee before endorsement by the College Council. The Plan was then widely disseminated throughout the College.

Regular classroom observations should be extended to all staff in line with the strategic aim of continuous pedagogic improvement.

This has been implemented. Classroom observations are now no longer limited to newly appointed staff. These observations are undertaken by the Dean, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Undergraduate Programme Coordinator. The template form, which is used to evaluate teaching sessions, is clear and focuses appropriately on all aspects of classroom management.

The current moratorium on administrative staff appointments should be kept under constant review by College of Law management in order to ensure that adequate administrative support is maintained at all times.

The College has strengthened its staffing in many areas. This includes an additional two appointments to work under the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs.

The College should review all courses and units of learning to ensure a consistent approach, thus replacing any legacy learning objectives.

In the process of developing its new five-year plan the College has taken the opportunity to ensure a consistent approach to the setting of intended learning outcomes for its courses and programmes. These intended learning outcomes are grouped under its six main pillars, Knowledge, Legal Thinking, Scholarly Research, Communication, Ethics and Professionalism and Self-management and Cooperation.

The opportunity should be taken to develop an extended learning, teaching and assessment strategy, building on good practice evidenced at other institutions.

The College has engaged in an extensive intelligence gathering exercise to be able to draw upon best practice in other institutions and legal systems, especially those of the UK and USA. This process is facilitated by the experience of College staff of British and American law schools. It has yet to manifest itself in the publication of an overarching learning, teaching and assessment strategy.

The College of Law could take this opportunity to improve the content of its website to provide a greater depth of analysis in respect of its programmes, courses and other aspects of its work.

The College website has been subject to regular updating and now offers more comprehensive information on its programmes.

It is recommended that the College introduces trend analysis at the next semester and end of year programme and course review.

Trend analysis is conducted regularly, and analysed in detail, at both course and programme level.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments The College's close working relationship with key government departments ensures that its strategy is in line with national imperatives.				

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments There has been considerable strengthening of both academic and administrative staffing and in the College's reporting structures.				

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments There have been significant developments in the College's approach to its teaching, particularly through its emphasis on experiential learning, including its Law Clinic and mooting, and its externship programme which				

exposes students to current practice in the field. As a result, its graduates are well-prepared for employment.

4.4 Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments Increased staffing levels have enhanced the support and guidance available to students.				

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be		✓		
Comments The College is planning to appoint a law librarian ahead of the scheduled opening of the new Law Library in 2020. When completed, the new premises for the College and its library will enhance, significantly, the student experience.				

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

	Met	Partially met	Not met	
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments In its constructive response to the original accreditation report, and its engagement with the interim inspection, the College has demonstrated its strong commitment to quality assurance and enhancement.				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS
Academic and administrative staff are very well-qualified and form an effective team.
The integration of practical, experiential, learning into the student learning experience prepares students well for employment.
There is a clear commitment to enhancement, which is clearly reflected in the work of the International Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee.
The College is very outward looking, exemplified by the composition of the newly established College Advisory Board.

ACTIONS REQUIRED	Priority H/M/L
23.1 The College must ensure the appointment of a dedicated Law Librarian prior to the opening of the new College of Law Library.	M

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
It is recommended that the College formalises the arrangements for internal pre-assessment moderation.
The College should, at the earliest opportunity, widen external input, beyond the University, to the pre- and post-assessment process.
The College should ensure an early adoption of a more formal risk management process, which addresses the entirety of the College's operation.
It is recommended that the College uses knowledge of best practice in other institutions and legal systems to produce an overarching learning, teaching and assessment strategy.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS	
Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.	YES
Further comments, if applicable	