



BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM VISIT (International Centre)

INSTITUTION: National University, Sudan

ADDRESS: P.O. Box 3783
Khartoum
Code 11111
Sudan

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Professor Qurashi M. Ali

Accreditation status: Accredited

Date of visit: 6 October 2016

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION ON ACCREDITATION:

1. Background to the institution

The National University, Sudan (the University/NUSU) was established in 2005 as the National College for Medical and Technical Studies in Khartoum, Sudan. From 2005 to 2013 it was a Private Limited Company, known as the National College Company. From 2013, the ownership status changed to a public registered company, known as the National Company for Advanced Educational Systems. As a public company, it is controlled by national laws and is registered and monitored by the Khartoum Stock Market. In 2013 the institution was made a full University, known as the National University, Sudan.

The University's vision is to be a world-class leading provider of higher education in Sudan.

A Board of Trustees has operated since 2014 and holds two meetings a year. The President of the University, the Administrative and Financial Committee and the Nominations and Honorary Degrees Committee all report to the Board of Trustees.

The University owns its own premises and is currently expanding its available space with a new hospital, which is due to open March 2017.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research carry out an initial and then a full inspection to approve a college, promote it to a university or when a new programme is added. After approval, no regular re-evaluation takes place unless there are complaints or unexpected events. The Data Collection Form shows that NUSU received its final inspection in October 2013 promoting it to university status and in March 2016, it received an initial inspection of its Faculty of Engineering. The Sudan Medical Council renews accreditation every five years. The inspector was informed that NUSU submitted a request for re-accreditation earlier in 2016, but to date have not had a response. The inspector asked NUSU to notify BAC of the outcome of the re-accreditation after it has taken place. The Sudan Council for Medical and Health Specialities inspects and recognises para-medical colleges but has no power over universities in Sudan.

2. Brief description of the current provision

All teaching at NUSU is conducted in English and any student requiring language support is identified at the outset and advised to enrol on English Language provision, provided by the British Council.

The student population and range of academic provision continues to grow rapidly. The range of programmes embraces bachelor degrees in medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, medical laboratory science, nursing and midwifery, radiography, physiotherapy, health informatics, administrative science, international relations and diplomatic studies and engineering. The administrative science provision includes courses in business administration, accountancy, marketing and business information systems. Health informatics is relatively new, and has not yet reached the stage where external examiners operate. All the other provision has an associated external examiner. A range of postgraduate degree programmes and a PhD programme have been approved, since the full inspection.

The total student population is currently 3865 full-time students. Most of the students are 18 years of age or older and they consist of both of male and female students. Approximately nine per cent of the students are under the age of 18, which is acceptable under Sudanese law. The majority of students are drawn from Sudan but students are also recruited from neighbouring countries including Nigeria, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

The majority of the 286 academic staff are full-time employees.

NUSU does not yet offer student residential accommodation. This is included within its five-year plan. It does maintain records of students' addresses, location, type of accommodation and with whom the student is housed. In addition, NUSU seeks information from students on their needs and expectations which will be considered in their plan for the provision of hostels.

3. Inspection visit process

The inspection was carried out by one inspector through email and by holding a single meeting using an electronic medium on one day from BAC's offices. In attendance were the President, the Principal, the Quality Manager, the Student Welfare Manager, the Assistant Student Welfare Manager, the Academic Secretary and the Administrative Affairs Manager.

4. Inspection history

Full inspection: 12 and 15 October 2015

PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgements 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

NUSU has started to establish an Engineering Faculty but so far this only has its foundations and girders in place. The Engineering Faculty is due to open in full in October 2017, but the basement and ground floor will be finished and utilised in January 2017. As the first two semesters of the Civil and Electrical Engineering courses are mainly based on the study of basic sciences, the courses are provided within NUSU's main campus building. The drawing laboratory has temporarily been placed in one of the University's halls.

Since the last inspection, NUSU has built 8 new lecture rooms, which can accommodate an additional 1,760 students in total and 36 staff offices.

Masters' degree programmes have now been approved in human clinical anatomy, hospital pharmacy, microbiology and infection control, clinical chemistry, parasitology, clinical haematology, histopathology, radiography and ultrasonography. In addition, a general Masters in Business Administration (MBA) and subject specific MBAs in human resources, hospital management, marketing, project management, finance and entrepreneurship have been approved. At the time of the inspection, only four of these masters' degree programmes had recruited students.

Five candidates are currently preparing their research proposals for the award of a PhD in anatomy.

2. Response to action points in last report

3.2 The University must strengthen the process by which it verifies the experience and qualifications claimed during the staff appointment process.

A policy has been produced and thorough procedures developed to verify experience and qualification claimed by applicants for staff positions. The policy and procedures were approved in December 2015 and began to be implemented for staff recruitment in June and July 2016 for the new academic year. Telephone verification of an applicant's previous employment is carried out and signed by the verifier. The name of the human resources staff member who carries out the recommended criminal background check is shown on the form. In addition, the educational attainment claimed by the candidate is verified in writing directly with his or her educational provider. Evidence of completed documentation was provided to the inspector.

11.4 Priority must be given to the development of pedagogic skills across all the University's teaching teams.

NUSU has developed a short course entitled "Basic Certificate in Teaching" which is a 12-credit programme consisting four workshops on teaching and learning, one teaching observation with and without video-taping, and a short reflection paper. The programme should be completed within 4 weeks and is offered every six weeks. It is compulsory for all teaching assistants and lecturers, with senior academic staff encouraged to enrol. Graduates of the basic certificate will be eligible to enrol on the NUSU Advanced Certificate in Teaching programme. The inspector was provided with completed teaching observation feedback forms, which were conscientiously completed, reflective papers completed by candidates and the resulting attendance certificates relating to the four-workshop programme.

The programme commenced in August 2016 and has been enthusiastically embraced particularly by new teaching staff. Its content is thorough and well thought through. It sets out NUSU's continuing professional development mission, a description of the certificate, its requirements, its learning outcomes covering the characteristics of quality instruction and the scholarship that underpins it, the practical application of learner-centred experiences and techniques, teaching observation, lesson planning and assessment and the application of underlying theories, principles and skills to teaching adult learners.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The University should review the committee structure, with a view to optimising the effectiveness of communication channels and efficiency of the institution.

The number of university committees has been reduced to 24 from 36, in order to increase efficiency and improve communication. The effectiveness of the new structure will become evident over time. The inspector was provided with comprehensive documentation explaining the committee structure, membership, duties and responsibilities, to which body each committee is accountable and the minimum number of meetings per year.

The Faculty Board and Education and Curriculum Committee report to the Academic Council, which in turn reports to the President of the University. The Quality Standards and Governance Committee and Health and Safety and Risk Assessment Committee report directly to the President of the University. This provides a separation between education and curriculum and quality and standards which enables the latter to be independent. Students are represented on committees as appropriate, such as Quality, Standards and Governance, Scholarship and Fees, Student Welfare and Career Advice, Library, ICT and e-learning, Health, Safety and Risk Assessment. The President of the University reports to the Board of Trustees which in turn is accountable to the Minister of Higher Education.

The University should further develop the systematic use of data collected to present decision-making and performance monitoring information.

A consulting company has been engaged to provide a proposal, which was received on 4 October. The activity schedule for the proposal was seen by the inspector and will now be considered by NUSU with a view to implementation by the end of December 2016.

The University should introduce a procedure for proof-reading its proposed publications to reduce typographical and grammatical errors.

A media, publicity, publications and public relations co-ordinator has been appointed, whose responsibilities include proof-reading of publicity material to reduce errors. The inspector was provided with the job description for the post.

The University should consider ways in which it can enhance the approach it takes to communicating its response to the feedback obtained from students.

The inspector was provided with a copy of the new 'you said we did' poster which is now in use and provides feedback to all students three times per semester and when action regarding the request by students has been enacted. This is in addition to verbal feedback, which is provided through the normal staff student committee process.

The University should review the performance of Academic Council on a regular basis.

A policy has been produced and will be discussed at the next meeting of the Academic Council, which meets biannually. It will subsequently be presented to the Board of Trustees for approval. The Academic Council's next scheduled meeting is April 2017, but the inspector was informed that an extraordinary meeting is likely to take place, following the interim inspection, to discuss and approve the performance review proposals. The inspector was informed that the Academic Council does review performance of the university and was shown some cohort statistics which had been considered at a previous meeting.

The University should further develop its performance review capability through greater use of centrally generated statistical information and KPI measurements.

The consulting company, referred to above, has provided a proposal for generating statistical information and KPI measurements, which is now under consideration by NUSU.

The University should use its existing oversight processes, which reflect on the course monitoring reports, with a view to identifying those reports which are not at a level to make an effective contribution, and introducing mechanism (such as CPD training) to eliminate poor quality reporting.

Reports have been re-designed to include Continuing Professional Development (CPD) as part of the process. The inspector was shown a teaching observation form, which provided details of session information, professional disposition of the instructor and instructional sequence. The form provided for a post-session interview, including a section where strengths and opportunities could be recorded. The form required the signature of the instructor, observer, dean and CPD manager. Teaching observation is scheduled to take place bi-annually for every academic staff member, one carried out by a senior staff member and the other by a peer. The programme is currently being rolled out. Other reports are in the process of being re-designed with the help of a statistician to allow proper statistical analysis.

The University should place a greater focus upon the development of students' independent learning skills.

The inspector was shown a memo dated 8 August 2016 to all deans from the Academic Secretary and NUSU's BAC Project Manager reminding the recipients that Student Directed Learning (SDL) should be undertaken positively and that timetables should have sufficient time made available for SDL and that students use it properly. It recommended the use of timed and titled assignments for this purpose. In addition, the need for structured SDL is incorporated within staff CPD training.

The University should review the utility and effectiveness of the teacher observation process, ensure that report forms are completed with appropriate detail and ensure that feedback is provided to the CPD function so as to facilitate development activities

The revised teaching observation form is comprehensive and includes the input of the CPD Manager. The Basic Certificate in Teaching programme includes a classroom teaching observation with feedback.

The University should consider the introduction of an automated book loan process for the library.

An automated system was installed but NUSU encountered many difficulties with it. This has resulted in a new version being introduced from November 2016.

The University should review its library book stock to remove old and outdated copies of texts.

The Library Committee has determined that the life of a text is 10 years. The inspector was informed that all old and outdated texts have been removed. NUSU has encountered some difficulty regarding funds transfer from the Sudanese government due to an embargo placed upon it but there is renewed hope that this will be at least partially lifted in the near future.

The University should review the nature of its (careers) advice and guidance provision as new subject areas come on stream.

Career advice is delivered to students at induction and discussed throughout the duration of their courses within the new faculties as well as for students on medical and medically related courses. A careers advice office has been established to help students determine and access a career path. In accordance with its mission, NUSU provides advice and guidance on options for suitable careers, building CVs, identifying skills gaps, job searches, application processes and the location of relevant training courses. NUSU also provides careers advisor training through its CPD programme.

The University should consider the arrangements for access to the buildings for physically disabled students and review procedures relating to all forms of disability.

A suitable disabled student policy with sufficiently broad coverage was provided to the inspector. Work is continuing on the construction of a lift in the building, which is due to be completed in December 2016 and will

accommodate students with mobility difficulties. The inspector was provided with photographs of the lift's construction in progress. In addition, improvements have been made to ramp access outside the building, with evidence again provided to the inspector.

The University should review the policy documentation on complaints and appeals to ensure consistency.

A student appeal procedure was made available to the inspector and provides for appeal in a series of steps through to the University President if necessary. The object is to resolve a dispute on a stage by stage basis, culminating in judicial review if necessary. The aim is to respond to a student complaint within a week. The policy states that if a student or their representative has completed NUSU's appeal procedure but is still not satisfied they may appeal directly to BAC by submitting a detailed letter of complaint, a signed statement authorising BAC to investigate and copies of supporting documentation. BAC's contact details are provided to students.

The University should review its procedures on how it may advise visitors at reception on its basic health and safety procedures.

Visitors are welcomed by a staffed reception desk located at the gate of the University. There is visible health and safety information. A visitor pass card system is in use which provides emergency contact numbers on the back. Visitors are escorted to meet the NUSU staff member they are visiting. Access for students is through their smart identity cards at the gate. Records show who entered the premises and when.

The University should review its use and positioning of visual-aid or presentation equipment, thus enabling student learning to be better facilitated.

The inspector was informed that additional monitors have been installed and evidence was presented of the main lecture rooms having been stepped at different heights to allow improved sight lines for students.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements – spot check

4.1 Management, Staffing and Administration

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments NUSU possesses a senior management team, which is committed to the concept of continuous improvement. The staff who attended the inspection were polite, friendly and seemed to regard the whole exercise as an opportunity to improve and develop the institution.				

4.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments To complete their degree, students must pass two English language courses as well as their subject specific assessments. Students who are unsuccessful in the assessment in English language may proceed with their NUSU academic course but are unlikely to succeed as the course is taught in English. Students are advised to take the English language course offered by the British Council if they are unsuccessful in the NUSU English language assessments. NUSU has devised and is operating a well thought through programme of professional development in teaching practice and is to be commended for this. At the end of the programme participants are required to produce a reflective paper. The evidence seen by the inspector demonstrated that the reflective papers presented by some participants were only descriptive rather than reflective and it is recommended that NUSU encourages all participants to use the opportunity to reflect on their aims, expectations and future				

needs and actions to gain full value from the exercise rather than simply describing the content of the course.

4.3 Learner Welfare

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

4.4 Premises and Facilities

	Met	Partially met	Not met	NA
The standards are judged to be	✓			
Comments				

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

Provider’s strengths
A very positive attitude of senior staff, especially to the actions and recommendations presented in the full inspection. It is clear that NUSU has a culture of continuous improvement.
A highly commendable certificated professional development programme in basic teaching, which is now being developed further to also offer an advanced certificate programme.

Actions required	Priority H/M/L
None	

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
The University should implement the systematic use of data collected to present decision-making and performance monitoring information.
The University should consider and implement, as appropriate, the proposal for generating statistical information and KPI measurements.
It is recommended that specific support in English language is provided by NUSU for students who are unsuccessful in their English language assessments, in addition to any support offered by the British Council.
It is recommended that NUSU encourages all staff participants in the Basic Certificate in Teaching course to use the opportunity to reflect on their aims, expectations and future needs and actions to gain full value from the exercise rather than simply describing the content of the course in their reflective paper.

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