



December 15, 2022

Chief Negotiator (UAE CEPA)
Middle East FTA Branch, Regional Trade Agreements Division
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Murdoch University Submission to Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)



The Issue

Degree Testamurs must be equalized by the UAE government to be recognized for purposes of residence, employment, and promotion. The Ministry of Education of the UAE federal government has stopped equalizing degrees for students who complete their studies at international branch campuses of universities registered with the Emirate of Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority. This has created the inequitable situation in which students holding a degree issued by a Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) registered self-accrediting university, e.g. Murdoch University, can have their degree equalized if they studied at the Perth campus, but cannot have their degree equalized if they studied at the Dubai campus, even though they hold exactly the same degree.

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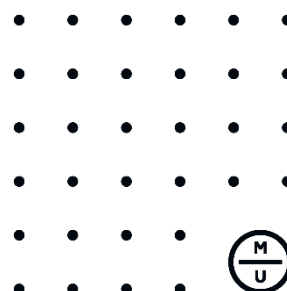
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Accreditation

As an international branch campus of Murdoch University, Murdoch University Dubai is covered by the university's TEQSA registration. The university's periodic reregistration with TEQSA as a self-accrediting institution includes all aspects of the operation of the international branch campuses to ensure quality and compliance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF). The Dubai campus, as a branch campus, does not issue the final testamurs, transcripts, and related documentation. Students who successfully complete their studies at any Murdoch campus, including Dubai, receive their degree from Murdoch University, Perth, Western Australia. As a Murdoch University degree, it is covered by the TEQSA accreditation status of the university as an Australian University. By equalizing degrees issued to students who study at the Perth campus, but not those issued by Murdoch University to students who study at the Dubai campus, the UAE government is enforcing a distinction that does not exist. They are the same degree, issued by Murdoch as a self-accrediting institution, registered with the Australian regulator, TEQSA.

Equivalence

All courses taught at the Dubai campus contain equivalent content, assessments, and learning outcomes as the courses taught at the home campus in Perth. The units that make up the courses are created by academics at the Murdoch campus in Perth and are reviewed and approved through Murdoch's rigorous quality governance processes. While the content is delivered by academic staff in Dubai, this delivery is under the oversight of the Unit Coordinator in Perth and the Dubai Dean. This process ensures that



Dubai students receive the same content, complete the same assessment tasks, and achieve the same learning outcomes as the students in Perth. This is not only a requirement of the university's TEQSA registration, but also a requirement of the KHDA.

Quality Assurance

All aspects of course content, student outcomes, and academic quality are monitored and assured by the oversight of the quality assurance processes of Murdoch University, Perth. The Unit Coordinators and the Dubai Dean monitor teaching quality on a continuous basis. The university engages in moderation of all student work to ensure comparability and consistency of marking across all campuses and unit offerings. Results Committees and Boards of Studies review results and moderation outcomes to provide additional assurance of quality outcomes. As noted previously, all of these processes and adherence to the HESF are reviewed by TEQSA and the KHDA at regular intervals.

Recognition of TEQSA Accredited Degrees

As indicated above, the Dubai campus does not issue testamurs or transcripts. Like all Murdoch University students, those students who complete their studies at the Dubai campus receive their testamurs and transcripts from the main campus in Perth. They receive a Murdoch University degree, not a Murdoch University Dubai degree. The award is the same in every way. These students have legally and legitimately received an Australian higher education award. If they are unable to have this degree recognized and equalized in the UAE, they are being disadvantaged compared to all other students who have achieved exactly the same award at the Perth campus.

In addition to the disadvantage to this cohort of students, the practice is also anticompetitive, potentially depriving employers in emirates outside of Dubai of highly qualified staff. These students have successfully completed a high-quality, Australian degree. They should be able to compete for employment on a level playing field and employers should be able to benefit from the knowledge and skills they have developed in the completion of their degrees.

Desired Outcome

The desired outcome sought in this submission is to achieve equal treatment of higher education awards issued by institutions granted self-accrediting status by TEQSA regardless of the location of delivery. In the case of Murdoch degrees, there is no basis for distinguishing between the degrees awarded to students who study in Perth and those awarded to those who study in Dubai. They are indistinguishable because they are exactly the same award. They should be given the same status by the UAE authorities.

Dr James M. Trotter
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