Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University welcomes International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) as partner of the consortium for the Benchmarking Framework for Online and Open Higher Education

7 June, 2021 - The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) has become an official partner of the Consortium for the Benchmarking Framework for Online, Open, Smart, and Technology-enhanced Higher Education. The consortium unites online and open universities from all over the world as well as higher education associations and quality assurance agencies to collectively develop the benchmarking framework which would help establish and promote a common understanding and criteria for quality in technology-enhanced higher education.

His Excellency Dr. Mansoor Al Awar, Chancellor of HBMSU, said: "A new partnership with ICDE – a leading international organization in online and distance education is an important milestone for the initiative considering its wealth of expertise and support for education-related projects to all through online, open, and distance learning. The demand for quality assurance in distant education has been the focus of the international community in the last decade, as an increasing number of universities integrate online platforms in delivering quality education. We are committed to collaborate with higher education institutions all over the world to support quality education and online learning and provide tools for continuous improvement."

Torunn Gjelsvik, Secretary General of ICDE, said: "ICDE has for many decades advocated and worked for the recognition of quality open, flexible and distance learning. Both the ICDE Quality Review Service and the ICDE Quality Network are means to this end. ICDE is proud to partner with this collaborative initiative that continues to spread a culture of quality in online education and more concretely helps universities self-assess and improve their own performances through the Benchmarking Framework. We are pleased to see that so many ICDE members already have joined the Consortium, and we now encourage the broader community of educators to partner up to actively engage in quality improvement of their online provision."

The first edition of the Benchmarking Framework was developed in collaboration with all members of the consortium, which consists of prominent universities and associations including the Association of Arab Universities, Asian Association of Open Universities, Commonwealth of Learning, Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, UNESCO-International Center for Higher Education Innovation, European Association of Distance Teaching Universities, and others. The framework includes six dimensions with 39 indicators, as well as evidence and data sources that can be used to show its achievements. This reflects unique characteristics of online, open, and smart universities and include factors such as the creation of innovative e-learning experiences, global engagement of a diverse faculty, agile delivery mechanisms, outcomes, and impact on society, among others.

The framework was announced in February 2021 together with the beginning of the pilot implementation phase with the participation of five universities: Asia e University, HBMSU, International Telematic University UNINETTUNO, University of the Philippines Open University, and Universitas Terbuka. The pilot will help evaluate the performance of the mentioned framework once it is implemented in higher education institutions and refine it to be further utilized by universities in all regions of the world.

For more information about the consortium and membership please contact Hamdan Bin Mohammed Smart University: ic@hbmsu.ac.ae