



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Programmes within-College Reviews Handbook

Date issued : September 2012

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Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

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ABBREVIATIONS

APQC	American Productivity and Quality Control
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
ED	Executive Director
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
INQAAHE	International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education
IT	Information Technology
MCQ	Multiple Choice Questions
QAA	UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QAAP	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project in Egypt
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SD	Senior Director
SER	Self-Evaluation Report

1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background to the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training	1
1.2 Overview of The Core Business of the QQA	1
1.3 The Directorate of Higher Education Reviews	2
1.4 Purpose of this Handbook	2
2. THE REVIEWS FRAMEWORK	3
2.1 Overview of the Higher Education Review Frameworks in Bahrain	3
2.2 Approach to Programme Reviews	3
2.3 Purposes and intended outcomes of Programmes-within-College Reviews	4
2.4 Statement of Principles that underpin the Programme Review Process	4
2.5 Definition of Higher Education Programmes	5
2.6 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Supersede Cycle 1 Programme Reviews	5
2.7 Steps in the Programmes-within-College Review Process	6
3. THE PROGRAMME REVIEW INDICATORS	8
3.1 The Programmes-Within College Reviews Indicators	8
3.2 The Judgements	13
4. THE PROGRAMMES-WITHIN-COLLEGE REVIEW PROCESS	14
4.1. Instituting the Process	14
4.2. Selection and Appointment of External Review Panel	14
4.3. Self-Evaluation, Self-Evaluation Report(s) and Supporting Documents	15
4.4. Portfolio Meeting(s)	20
4.5. The Preparatory Visit(s)	21
4.6. The Site Visit	22
4.7. The Programmes-within College Reviews Report(s)	27
4.8. Factual Accuracy and Comments	28

5. FOLLOW-UP TO THE REVIEWS	29
5.1 Improvement Plans	29
5.2 Follow-Up Visits	29
6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	30
6.1. College Contact Person	30
6.2. Appointment of Peer Reviewers (Panel Members)	31
6.3. Roles Of Peer Reviewers (Panel Members)	31
6.4. Personal Peer Reviewer Specification	32
6.5. Roles Of Review Directors	34
APPENDICES	35
APPENDIX 1 :	
Guidance And Templates 1 And 2 For Programme Self-Evaluation Reports	35
APPENDIX 2 :	
Template For Programme Specification	40
APPENDIX 3 :	
Template For Course/Module Specification	44
APPENDIX 4 :	
Template For Typical Site Visit Schedule For A Single Programme	47
APPENDIX 5 :	
Guidance And Template For Improvement Plan	48
APPENDIX 6 :	
Follow-Up Visit(s) Flowchart	50

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR QUALIFICATIONS & QUALITY ASSURANCE OF EDUCATION & TRAINING

The QQA was established by a Royal Decree as an independent national authority attached to the Cabinet of the Kingdom of Bahrain to ensure that the quality of education and training in Bahrain meets international standards and best practice in accordance with Economic Vision 2030. Under Article 4 of Royal Decree No. 32 of 2008, amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009, the QQA was mandated to ‘review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority’. With the promulgation of the Royal Decree No 83 of 2012 the QQA was renamed the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) with an extended mandate to develop and implement the national qualifications framework and ensure that the quality of education and training in Bahrain meets international standards and good practice in accordance with the vision set by the National Education Reform Initiatives.

‘The Authority aims to set, promote and develop the National Qualifications Framework and assure the quality of education and training, and shall be governed and supervised by the Cabinet Article (3).

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE CORE BUSINESS OF THE QQA

The QQA comprises two general directorates, namely: the General Directorate of Reviews and the General Directorate of Qualifications. The former consists of four directorates: the Directorate of Government Schools Reviews, the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens Reviews (both formerly comprised the Schools Review Unit; the Directorate of Vocational Reviews formerly the Vocational Review Unit; and the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), formerly the Higher Education Review Unit. The General Directorate of Qualifications Framework (DGQ) comprises the Directorate of Framework Operations (DFO) and the Directorate of Academic Cooperation (DAC). The other core business of the QQA is the Directorate of National Examinations (DNE), formerly the National Examinations Unit.

1.3 THE DIRECTORATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEWS

The five main objectives of the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) are to:

- enhance the quality of higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain by conducting reviews into the quality assurance arrangements of higher education institutions in the Kingdom and identifying areas in need of improvement and areas of strength
- conduct programme reviews within higher education to ensure that international standards are being met
- ensure that there is public accountability of higher education providers through the provision of an objective assessment of the quality of each provider and programmes (Review Reports) for use by parents, students, the Higher Education Council, and other relevant bodies
- promote quality assurance in higher education through (i) facilitating capacity development workshops and related activities; (ii) liaising with the Higher Education Council, industry, business and other stakeholders; and (iii) identifying good practice where it exists and disseminating it throughout the Bahraini higher education sector
- serve an advocacy role for Bahrain higher education within the Kingdom, the region and internationally.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook serves firstly as a guide for institutions which are undergoing Programmes-within-College Reviews with respect to the requirements of DHR; secondly, it provides reviewers with information regarding their roles and responsibilities as they carry out reviews.

2. THE REVIEWS FRAMEWORK

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW FRAMEWORKS IN BAHRAIN

The DHR of the QQA conducts two types of reviews that complement each other; namely:

- **Institutional reviews** where the whole of the institution is subject to a quality review that assesses the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance arrangements against a predefined set of quality indicators and identifies areas of strengths and opportunities for improvements.
- **Programme reviews** which are a specialized exercise that focuses on the quality assurance arrangements within existing learning programmes within a college and measures whether programmes meet international standards as well as make recommendations for improving the programmes.

2.2 APPROACH TO PROGRAMME REVIEWS

Programmes-within-College Reviews are specialized exercises, that focus on the academic standards of each programme and its delivery and the quality assurance arrangements within all learning programmes at Bachelor and Master levels within a college in a particular major disciplinary area. For the purposes of this Framework, while the term 'College' is used, it includes the terms 'Faculty', 'School', (or any other equivalent term) which offers a higher education programme. All programmes leading to a qualification at Bachelor or Master level are in scope and are subject to review with the exception of Masters that are done only by research. Foundation provision may also be reviewed depending on how it has been conceptualized by the institution, for example, if it functions as an extended curriculum rather than a standalone programme.

The reviews are carried out using four Indicators each of which has a number of sub-indicators and which are in line with international good practice. The Review Reports developed as a result of the Programmes-within-College Reviews will make judgements about whether or not each of the programmes meets the requirements of each Indicator as well as make recommendations for the enhancement of the programmes. All programmes offered within a college will be reviewed simultaneously.

2.3 PURPOSES AND INTENDED OUTCOMES OF PROGRAMMES WITHIN-COLLEGE REVIEWS

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the QQA, Higher Education Council, students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

The outcomes of the Programmes-within-College Reviews are:

- a written report prepared by the Review Panel, approved by QQA Board and endorsed by the Cabinet for each programme reviewed
- an improvement plan, for each programme reviewed, prepared by the college based on the outcomes of the Programmes-within-College Reviews
- follow-up visit(s) for programmes receiving a 'limited confidence, or 'no confidence' judgement.

2.4 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE PROGRAMME REVIEW PROCESS

The design and conduct of Programmes-within-College Reviews are guided by principles drawn from key sources worldwide. These sources include the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), and the European Standards and Guidelines published by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The eight principles are:

- (1) Institutions providing award-bearing programmes are responsible for the quality of the programme and the academic standards of the academic award.
- (2) Academic programmes need to demonstrate relevance and gain deserved recognition in the region and internationally.
- (3) Review is a continuing process with internal (that includes a self-evaluation report) and external elements (a site-visit by a peer review panel, which may include

international, regional and local members), supporting written reports and follow up of, for instance, improvement plans, which together inform and support continuing improvement.

- (4) The processes of review and continuing improvement are enhanced when institutions engage with the range of their stakeholders (those individuals, groups and organizations that have a legitimate interest in the quality of education programmes and their graduates).
- (5) Criteria for formal decisions are clear and applied consistently.
- (6) Evaluation is dependent on clarity of the stated programme aims, intended learning outcomes and is sensitive to the mission of the institution.
- (7) Review processes and the derived outcomes are evidence-based and conducted with openness and transparency.
- (8) Peer review plays a key part in evaluating information, conducting analyses and conversations with institutions and other stakeholders in order to reach evidence based conclusions.

2.5 DEFINITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

For the purpose of Programmes-within-College Reviews, an academic programme (programme) is defined as one which admits students who, on successful completion, receive an academic qualification. Programmes-within-College Reviews apply to all academic programmes at Bachelor and Master levels in all higher education institutions as well as foundation programmes where appropriate (section 3.2). Where programmes are studied in more than one institution, the whole programme is included in the Programmes-within-College Reviews.

2.6 THE PROGRAMMES - WITHIN - COLLEGE REVIEWS SUPERSEDE CYCLE 1 PROGRAMME REVIEWS

The Programmes-within-College Reviews constitute Cycle 2 in the programme review process. This Framework takes precedence over the framework stated in the Programme Review Handbook published in 2009 and which constituted Cycle 1. As a result, any programme reviewed in Cycle 1 which received a 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' judgement and which at the time of the approval of Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework by the QQA Board and endorsed by the Cabinet have not yet had their reports published will only be reviewed again as part of the Programmes-within-College Reviews. If the college is scheduled for a review within six months of the due date for the programme to be re-reviewed then the programme will only be reviewed as part of the Programmes-within-College Reviews. In effect, the follow-up and re-review process contained in the Cycle 1 Handbook will no longer be carried out.

2.7 STEPS IN THE PROGRAMMES - WITHIN - COLLEGE REVIEW PROCESS

As stated earlier, one of the main activities of the DHR of the QQA is conducting programme reviews within higher education institutions to ensure that international standards are being met. The DHR will notify the colleges that their programmes will be subjected to reviews and prepare a schedule that is approved by the QQA. The review cycle starts with the college being notified of the intended review dates. The college submits a review portfolio for each of its offerings, at least, two months before the scheduled site visit. The rest of the process is:

- a site visit to each programme offered within the college taking place simultaneously
- a Review Report for each programme, published by the QQA, that contains a judgement
- the submission of an Improvement Plan in response to the Review Report
- follow-up visit(s) for programmes receiving 'Limited Confidence' or 'No Confidence' judgements.

The detailed activities and typical timelines for the review process are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Activities and typical timelines for the review process in the Programmes-within-College Reviews: 2012 – 2017.

Activity	Undertaken By	Timeline
Pre-Site Visit		
Inform Institution about Review Dates	Executive Director (ED)	-16 to -12 weeks
Self-evaluation Workshop	ED + Senior Directors (SDs)	-14 to -10 weeks
Appointing Review Panel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel members selection • Panel members approval by Chief Executive (CE) • Invitation of panel members • Declaration Forms • Confirmation of panel members by the institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Review Director(s) in conjunction with ED ❖ Chief Executive ❖ Review Director(s) ❖ Review Director(s) ❖ Review Director 	-16 to -10 weeks
Initiate logistic arrangements (Travel/ accommodation arrangements for panel members)	Liaison Assistant	-10 to -8 weeks
Self-Evaluation Report (SER) submission	Institution/College	-10 to -8 weeks
Sending SER and supporting material (Hard and Soft copies) to Panel	Liaison Assistant/Information officer(s)	-8 weeks
Preliminary report on SER by Panel Identification of extra evidence needed and people to meet	Panel members + Review Director(s) + Information Officer	-5 weeks
Portfolio meeting (teleconference)	Panel members + Review Director(s) + Information Officer(s)	-4 weeks
Preparatory meeting(s) with College (extra evidence, review schedule, briefings etc.)	Review Director(s)	-3 weeks
Submission of extra evidence and names of interviewees	Institution/College	-2 weeks
Finalizing site visit schedule and preparations	Review Director(s)	-1 week
Site Visit 3-5 days depending on number of programmes within college		

3. THE PROGRAMME REVIEW INDICATORS

The framework for evaluation, based on the four main Indicators and the sub-indicators discussed below, is applicable to all academic fields, higher education institutions as well as institutions offering higher education programmes. It will form the basis for self-evaluation, the site-visit by peer reviewers and the Programmes-within-College Review Reports.

3.1 THE PROGRAMMES-WITHIN COLLEGE REVIEWS INDICATORS

3.1.1 The Learning Programme

Indicator 1: *The programme demonstrates fitness for purpose in terms of mission, relevance, curriculum, pedagogy, intended learning outcomes and assessment.*

- 3.1.1.1. There is a clear academic planning framework for the programme which shows that there are clear aims that indicate the broad purposes of providing the programme and are related to the mission of the institution and the college and its strategic goals.
- 3.1.1.2. The curriculum is organized to provide academic progression year-on-year or course-by-course suitable workloads for students, and it balances between knowledge and skills, and between theory and practice.
- 3.1.1.3. The syllabus (i.e. curricular content, level, and outcomes) meets the norms and standards of the particular disciplinary field and award and is accurately documented in terms of breadth, depth, and relevance, with appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and published research findings.
- 3.1.1.4. Intended learning outcomes are expressed in the programme specifications and are aligned with the mission and programme aims and objectives and are appropriate for the level of the degree.
- 3.1.1.5. There are course/module Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) appropriate to the aims and levels of the course/module and they are mapped to the programme and courses.
- 3.1.1.6. Where relevant to the programme, there is an element of work-based learning that contributes to the achievement of learning and receives credits and there is a clear assessment policy.
- 3.1.1.7. The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of aims and intended learning outcomes. These approaches relate to:

- teaching and learning policies
- range of teaching methods
- students' participation in learning
- exposure to professional practice or applications of theory
- encouragement of personal responsibility for learning
- development of independent learning.

3.1.1.8. Suitable assessment arrangements, which include policies and procedures, are in place and known to all academics and students to assess students' achievements
These arrangements include:

- formative and summative functions with clear criteria for marking
- appropriate mechanisms to provide students with prompt feedback on their progress and performance that assists further learning
- a match of what is assessed to the programme aims and intended learning outcomes
- transparent mechanisms for grading students' achievements with fairness and rigour.

3.1.2 Efficiency of the Programme

Indicator 2: *The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.*

- 3.1.2.1 There is a clear admission policy which is periodically revised and the admission requirements are appropriate for the level and type of the programme.
- 3.1.2.2 The profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources.
- 3.1.2.3 There are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the programme.
- 3.1.2.4 Faculty members and others who contribute to the programme are fit for purpose:
 - there are sufficient staff to teach the programme
 - there is an appropriate range of academic qualifications and specializations
 - where appropriate there is relevant robust professional experience
 - the profile of recent and current academic research, teaching or educational development matches the programme aims and curricular content.

- 3.1.2.5 There are clear procedures for the recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention of academic staff that are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner and arrangements are in place for the induction of newly appointed academic staff.
- 3.1.2.6 There is a functioning management information system to enable informed decision-making.
- 3.1.2.7 There are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- 3.1.2.8 Physical and material resources are adequate in number, space, style and equipment; these include classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories and other study spaces; Information Technology (IT) facilities, library and learning resources.
- 3.1.2.9 There is a tracking system to determine the usage of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources and it allows for evaluation of the utilization of these resources.
- 3.1.2.10 There is appropriate student support available in terms of library, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, guidance and support care.
- 3.1.2.11 Arrangements are in place for orienting newly admitted students (including those transferring from other institutions with direct entry after Year 1).
- 3.1.2.12 There is an appropriate academic support system in place to track students' progress which identifies students at-risk of failure; and provides interventions for at-risk students.
- 3.1.2.13 The learning environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning.

3.1.3 Academic Standards of the Graduates

Indicator 3: *The graduates of the programme meet academic standards compatible with equivalent programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.*

- 3.1.3.1 Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of aims and achieved learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and are ensured through the use of assessment which is valid and reliable in terms of the learning outcomes.
- 3.1.3.2 Benchmarks and internal and external reference points are used to determine and verify the equivalence of academic standards with other similar programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally. This will include clear statements and evidence about:
 - the purpose of benchmarking

- the choice of what is benchmarked and what it is against
 - how the process is managed
 - how the outcomes are used.
- 3.1.3.3 Assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular review and are made available to students.
- 3.1.3.4 There are mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment with outcomes to assure the academic standards of the graduates.
- 3.1.3.5 There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation system for setting assessment instruments and grading student achievement.
- 3.1.3.6 There are procedures which are consistently implemented for the external moderation of assessment and there are mechanisms to allow for feedback on assessment in line with assessed courses.
- 3.1.3.7 The level of achievement as expressed in samples of students' assessed work is appropriate to the level and type of the programme in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.
- 3.1.3.8 The level of achievement of graduates meets programme aims and intended learning outcomes, as demonstrated in final results, grade distribution and confirmation by internal and external independent scrutiny.
- 3.1.3.9 The ratios of admitted students to successful graduates including rates of progression, retention, year-on-year progression, length of study and first destinations of graduates, are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.
- 3.1.3.10 Where assessed work-based learning takes place, there is a policy and procedure to manage the process and its assessment to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level to meet the intended learning outcomes. Mentors are assigned to students to monitor and review this.
- 3.1.3.11 Where there is a dissertation, thesis or industry project component there are policies and procedures and monitoring for supervision which state the responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and the postgraduate student and there is a mechanism to monitor implementation and improvement.
- 3.1.3.12 There is a functioning programme advisory board with clear terms of reference and it includes discipline experts, employers and alumni and its feedback is used systematically to inform programme decision-making.

3.1.3.13 There is evidence of graduate and employer satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile.

3.1.4 Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

Indicator 4: *The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.*

3.1.4.1 The institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently across the college.

3.1.4.2 The programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.

3.1.4.3 There is a clear quality assurance management system, in relation to the programmes within the college that is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.

3.1.4.4 Academics and support staff have an understanding of quality assurance and their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision.

3.1.4.5 There is a policy and procedures for the development of new programmes to ensure the programmes are relevant, fit for purpose, and comply with existing regulations.

3.1.4.6 There are arrangements for annual internal programme evaluation and implementation of recommendations for improvement.

3.1.4.7 There are arrangements for periodic reviews of the programmes that incorporate both internal and external feedback, and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.

3.1.4.8 The structured comments collected from, for example, students' and other stakeholders' surveys are analysed and the outcomes are used to inform decisions on programmes with mechanisms for improvement and are made available to the stakeholders.

3.1.4.9 The arrangements for identifying continuing professional development needs for all staff and meeting them are effective. These are monitored and evaluated.

3.1.4.10 Where appropriate for the programme type, there is continuous scoping of the labour market to ensure that programmes are up-to-date.

3.2 THE JUDGEMENTS

3.2.1 Outcomes of the review

The Panel states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is 'confidence' in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied the programme will receive a 'limited confidence' judgement. If one or no indicator is satisfied, the judgement will be 'no confidence'.

3.2.2 Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

This Indicator is a limiting judgement; i.e. if this Indicator is not satisfied, irrespective of whether the other Indicators are satisfied there will be a 'no confidence' judgement in the programme.

The summative judgement made as a result of the conclusion regarding each Indicator is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summative judgement

Criteria	Judgement
All four Indicators satisfied	Confidence
Two or Three Indicators satisfied, including Indicator 1	Limited Confidence
One or no Indicator satisfied	No Confidence
All cases where Indicator 1 is not satisfied	

4. THE PROGRAMMES-WITHIN-COLLEGE REVIEW PROCESS

4.1. INSTITUTING THE PROCESS

The Programmes-within-College reviews will be initiated by the QQA through DHR. It is expected that all higher education programmes (Bachelor and Masters) offered by higher education institutions operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain will be reviewed during the period 2012 – 2017.

The QQA will select the order in which these programmes and their relevant colleges will be reviewed. The QQA will publish a schedule and advise all higher education institution. Adequate notice will be given to allow the reviewees sufficient time to undertake robust self-evaluation(s). The Executive Director (ED) of DHR will send a letter informing the institution about key review dates such as those for the submission of self-evaluation report(s) and the site visit and will request the name of a contact person with whom the Review Director(s) can communicate about the review(s).

Approximately four months before the review DHR will conduct a preparation workshop on self-evaluation for which the college management team is expected to attend. The workshop is aimed to support the programme team in conducting a robust self-evaluation.

4.2. SELECTION AND APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL REVIEW PANEL

A review panel will be appointed for each college. The Panel size will vary depending on the number and range of programmes being reviewed. A chairperson will be nominated for each programme. A dedicated Review Director will be assigned for each programme to be reviewed. The Review Director and the chairperson may be responsible for more than one programme within the college under review. Whenever needed, one of these chairs and directors will be responsible for the overall review.

Review Panel members will be subject and/or higher education specialists and will be drawn from DHR's register of international, regional and local reviewers. Care will be taken to ensure an appropriate balance of expertise on each Panel and one that is relevant to the nature of the programme(s) under review.

DHR will provide the reviewee with the list of proposed panel members. The reviewee is asked to comment on panel members who should not be appointed because of conflict of interest but the reviewee cannot advise on its preferred membership.

Panel members will be requested to sign a declaration that they will keep confidential all information received in the course of the review in accordance with QQA policy. They also need to declare formally any matters that could pose a conflict of interest in their serving as a panel member. If the DHR agrees that a matter of conflict exists, the panel member will be replaced. The reviewee will be advised of the final composition of the Panel and

provided with brief biographical details of each member. Panel members will be given briefing material on the Bahraini context and use of the review Indicators before the Panel holds its first meeting, which is a teleconference, and with a face-to-face briefing before the site visit.

All communication between a reviewee and the Panel is through the DHR Review Director(s). Higher education institutions are not permitted to contact panel members directly.

Panel members require wisdom, sound judgement, an ability to respect others, and team skills. This contributes to ensuring that the Panel as a whole comes to a judgement that is fair, balanced and rigorous. Requirements and responsibilities of panel members and review directors are described in Section 6.3.

4.3. SELF - EVALUATION, SELF - EVALUATION REPORT(S) AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

One of the key principles of the QQA's initiatives in Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews is that institutions are responsible for the quality of the programme and the academic standards of the academic award. The achievement of this requires all institutions to develop and apply internal systems and processes to support continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement.

The review of each programme within the college will be based on a critical self-evaluation by the programme management team. Such a self-evaluation not only enables the programme team to supply the information required but has the potential to lead to improvements even without external review.

The DHR requires a programme self-evaluation report to be prepared as a basis for the external review. Appendix 1 provides guidance and templates 1 and 2 for institutions' self-evaluation reports. Template 1 presents the profile of the programme and the data set used. This is not only used by the institution as the basis for the evaluative report in Template 2 but also in the DHR Programme Review Report.

Once the database for internal review is established, much of the information can be carried over with updating each year. The Programme Review Indicators provide the structure for the analysis and evaluation in the self-evaluation report and the same structure is used for the DHR Programme Review Report.

The self-evaluation process provides the information for which a reviewee writes the self-evaluation report for each programme to be reviewed. The process of preparing a self-evaluation is as important to an institution as the content of its self-evaluation report. In higher education worldwide, good practice is demonstrated when programmes are evaluated not as a one-off event for an external review or site visit, but as part of a process

of sharing insights into the programme, clarifying the programme's aims and addressing gaps and anomalies that inevitably appear in the course of a rigorous evaluation. In addition, the self-evaluation report should look forward and set out priorities for improvement.

The DHR will treat a programme self-evaluation report as a formal document of the institution. It is therefore important for the institution to have suitable mechanisms for checking a draft report for factual accuracy and compliance with the Programmes-within-College Review Handbook before submitting it to DHR.

For each programme reviewed a portfolio consisting of the self-evaluation report, required data and tables in an appendix, and supporting material should be submitted to the Executive Director of the DHR by the agreed date.

Seven hard copies of the self-evaluation report and two hard copies of supporting materials should be submitted to the DHR Review Director. Seven soft copies (USBs) of the self-evaluation reports and the supporting material, should also be submitted. For information available on the institution's website, the specific URL should be given. The College will be informed if more hard and/or soft copies are required.

The DHR Review Director will ensure the completeness of the submitted materials. The copies of the portfolio will be sent to the panel members.

4.3.1. Confidentiality and Privacy of Information

The QQA and the panel members will treat the self-evaluation report as confidential, in accordance with QQA policy. Any confidential supporting material, such as commercial-in-confidence documents, should also be clearly labelled as 'confidential'.

As in external quality review processes in other countries, it is possible that the Review Panel may wish to see certain documents that an institution would regard as 'in confidence'. Access to these documents will be negotiated with the college's contact person. The Panel would usually view these documents on site. The Panel will not seek to view or ask to see the personnel records of any individual. The Panel may ask to see details of students' records but would expect the institution to provide these by student number, not by name, to protect the privacy of individuals.

4.3.2. Programme Specifications

Effective evaluation and improvement depend upon clear aims and intentions being articulated. Higher education is using specifications as part of the development of quality assurance. Each programme leading to an academic award must be specified using the template in Appendix 2. It will include a concise summary of the programme's main features and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. Each course

that contributes to the programme must also be specified. The programme specification maps how all intended learning outcomes are approached, assessed and achieved across the contributing courses.

The programme specification has to be submitted to, and endorsed by, the college council and then by the university council or equivalent. The former provides the basis for the design and delivery of the curriculum, a reference point for internal and external review and information for students and other stakeholders on the nature and academic standards set for the programme.

4.3.3. Course Specifications

Each course is to be specified using the template in Appendix 3. It will include the title of the academic award, the course title, the name of the person responsible within the department, an overall aim for the course, a set of intended learning outcomes and the course content (topics), together with a summary of the approaches adopted for teaching, learning and assessment, the required texts and other teaching materials, facilities and resources required.

4.3.4. Guidance on Benchmarking

The benchmarking activities referred to here are the formal process of comparing data on certain programme specifications or aspects or processes used to manage the programme between similar programmes offered by different institutions or between different programmes within one institution. It is essential that the college identifies formally and clearly what to benchmark and how to do it. Benchmarking could cover, but is not limited to, programme content, assessment practices and feedback policy, teaching methods, faculty members portfolio, staff development, quality management policies and processes, student support (both academic and non-academic), library size and content.

Sources of guidance and ethics for benchmarking include the 'Benchmarking Code of Conduct' published by the American Productivity and Quality Control (APQC), and the 'European Benchmarking Code of Conduct' published by Eurocode. The UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) also has published benchmark statements in a number of areas.

Formal policies and procedures governing the benchmarking activities are expected with clear benchmarking statements. Adequate records - for the activities and their output are required, including how the result of benchmarking was used in improving the programme, its delivery, and management - are expected to be provided to the Review Panel.

4.3.5. Guidance on the assessment of students' achievements

The assessment of students' performance and achievements in terms of the stated aims and intended learning outcomes of a programme presents a challenge in higher education worldwide. Success in this respect contributes to the level of confidence in the programme and its graduates more than any other single component of a programme. The development of an outcomes-related approach to higher education quality assurance requires considerable investment in student assessment strategies and methods and in an institution's regulations and procedures, including internal and external moderation and evaluation.

Sources of good practice in assessment include the Code of Practice for Assessment published by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Project (QAAP) in Egypt, and the Code of Practice on Student Assessment published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK.

The essence of good practice may be summarized as follows:

- i. Student assessment should be 'fit for purpose' in being appropriate for the articulated academic standards.
- ii. Programmes may employ three forms of assessment: *diagnostic*, *formative* and *summative*.
- iii. *Diagnostic assessment* determines the abilities of a student to determine the suitability of a course or programme; this is particularly useful for direct entry at levels of a programme higher than first year, and for some courses such as foreign languages.
- iv. *Formative assessment* provides information for teachers and the students on progress and what is being learned and applied, and on how the student can further their learning. Feedback to the student should be prompt, fair, objective and may be structured in a standard pro forma or template for consistency; feedback may also be face-to-face or by e-mail tutorial.
- v. *Summative assessment* contributes to credits and can use a range of methods ranging from laboratory and other practical work through major projects, case studies and dissertations, multiple choice questions (MCQ), to formal time-constrained and written examinations.
- vi. Self-assessment by students features in programmes or courses where the student is given greater responsibility for their learning.
- vii. Peer assessment may also be used in suitable contexts such as seminars with students' presentations and group projects.

- viii. In any viable total population, a normal distribution curve will apply. A *normative assessment* method, together with the use of reference points such as trends in outcomes, may be used to moderate aggregate outcomes; selective admissions can, however, create bias in the student group.
- ix. The development of outcomes-related approaches to higher education quality assurance emphasizes *criterion-referenced* assessment, where students either demonstrate the specified performance or not; criteria may be graded upwards from threshold in order to differentiate levels of performance.
- x. The balance and proportion of the total course assessment allocated to each type of assessment enables the students to demonstrate the achievement of all the intended learning outcomes, addressing knowledge and skills.
- xi. Faculty members responsible for courses, their academic colleagues and assistant teachers and examiners, should have access to the detailed arrangements for assessment of courses at all times, including type of assessment, schedule, credit rating, criteria for marking and grading, marking schemes and model answers.
- xii. Students should have access at all times (typically in a student handbook, programme handbook or website) to the schedule of assessment, the types of assessment, credit rating and criteria for marking and grading.
- xiii. The college or institution should have a clear policy and set of regulations for assessing students' achievements, including a clear function in either or both a senior faculty member and a committee or board.
- xiv. Internal moderation is essential to the quality assurance of the assessment of students' achievements. It ensures, before the students take the assessment, that the assessment designed to establish the students' progress in learning and their level of achievements, is valid, fair and meets the intended learning outcomes. Following the assessment, it checks that the marks awarded are correct, fair and statistically normal. Where justified, modifications to the accumulated marks and decisions on grades of pass, refer, and fail may be made.
- xv. External evaluation provides an independent professional opinion on the appropriateness of the assessment of the students' performance and the academic standards achieved on graduation. This is sometimes referred to as 'verification of the academic standards attained'. The functions and responsibilities of the external evaluator are normally the responsibility of the institution.
- xvi. Security of summative assessment is paramount (in particular, ensuring that examination questions and answers are not leaked and that questions are not repeated unduly in successive years; ensuring anonymity of answer scripts to protect students

from bias; preventing plagiarism and cheating by students; and ensuring that marks or pass/fail rates are not altered without justification).

xvii. Results of assessment should be released as soon as they have been checked, ratified and endorsed by the appropriate committee or board.

xviii. An appeals mechanism should be in place and made known to students.

Adequate records for the programme are required, including the examination questions and results itemized for each student and each assessment; these provide information for scrutiny by the Review Panel, the institution's external evaluators or any appeals committee established to review assessment of students' work.

4.4. PORTFOLIO MEETING(S)

Once the self-evaluation report(s) and supporting materials are submitted to the DHR of the QQA, copies are sent to members of the Review Panel. Panel members are requested to prepare brief written comments on the report, which are circulated to the entire Panel before the portfolio meeting. The panel members are also given briefing material on the Bahraini context.

Around two weeks after sending the documents, the Review Panel will hold portfolio meeting(s) by teleconference (local panel members may attend this meeting in person rather than by teleconference) to:

- discuss the Programmes-within-College Reviews process and the use of the Indicators
- discuss the self-evaluation report(s) in detail
- plan the reviews in detail
- identify any further information or clarification required from the college or other sources
- decide which information is needed in advance of, and which at, the site visit
- decide whether information will be sought from partner institutions and how this will be obtained
- decide on people to interview at the site visit and which parts of the campus and facilities to visit
- assign a lead, from the panel members, for each review Indicator for all programmes being reviewed.

Depending on the number of programmes offered within the college, the number and structure of the portfolio meeting(s) will be decided. A discussion on this regard will be held between the Review Director(s) and chairperson(s), if needed.

The self-evaluation report(s) will be read at two levels. At the first level, each panel member is reading for information on the extent to which the Indicators are met and will be forming preliminary views about this. At another level, the panel member is forming a judgement on the quality of the self-review and the depth of the analysis itself, and attempting to answer questions such as:

- How thorough and perceptive is this self-evaluation report?
- Does it show evidence of a genuine, useful self-evaluation, using appropriate standards and benchmarks?
- Does the self-evaluation report propose appropriate actions on identified weaknesses?

Reporting on areas requiring improvement does not always mean that the Panel will say that the programme or its delivery is not satisfactory. In fact, it is a sign that the institution's internal quality assurance arrangements are working, especially if there is evidence that the college has started to plan improvements. While there may be some things that only an external evaluation can reveal, the more rigorous the self-review and the more honest the self-evaluation report, the less there is for the Review Panel to have to ask about and the more the visit can concentrate on verification and validation.

Following the portfolio meeting, the Review Director(s) assigned to the Programmes-within-College Reviews, in consultation with panel members, map out a detailed programme for the site visit to the college. The Review Director(s) also produce a document detailing the issues identified by the Panel, grouped by topic, and the requests for further information identified at the panel meeting. This further documentation might include 'other evidence' referred to in the self-evaluation report, but it can include any material the Panel wishes to see. The list of further information required and the provisional site visit programme are discussed with the college at the preparatory visit(s) undertaken by the Review Director(s).

4.5. THE PREPARATORY VISIT(S)

Approximately one to two weeks after the portfolio meeting, and before the main site visit by the Panel, there are preparatory visit(s) to the college. These are conducted by the Review Director(s) on the Panel's behalf.

The purposes of the preparatory visit(s) are:

- to discuss the provisional site visit programme-check the appropriateness of selections and combinations of interviewees and ensure that the programme for the site visit meets the Panel's needs while being feasible for the college
- to discuss the further information required by the Panel — this might typically include questions of clarification (to which there are usually relatively short answers) and requests for further documents. The college may prepare provisional answers to the

questions and assemble possible documents before the preparatory visit, and these can be reviewed at this visit to see whether they will meet the Panel's requirements

- to check whether there are any sensitive issues of which the Panel should be aware
- to discuss the purpose behind the *ad hoc* interviews and how they will be conducted
- to review the logistics for the site visit (including viewing the proposed meeting room).

These activities can usually be achieved by the Review Director(s) meeting representatives of the institution's management, the nominated contact person, and head of departments, although the institution may well wish to involve others, such as the committee responsible for preparing the self-evaluation report. The Review Director(s) prepares the agenda for the preparatory visit(s) and sends it, in advance, to the institution.

After the preparatory visit, the Review Director(s) finalize the exact groupings of academic and administrative personnel, students and external stakeholders to be included in the site visit programme. A final site visit programme should be produced no less than one week before the date of the site visit. The college provides the additional material that has been requested on the agreed date prior to the site visit.

During the period before the site visit, there may be agreed visits by the Review Director and/or the ED: DHR to overseas parent or partner organizations relevant to the programme(s) being reviewed. These visits are part of the formal site visit and involve similar preparations to the main visit which is agreed upon with the Panel. The Review Director will be acting on behalf of the Review Panel. Visits to other campuses (if applicable), may also occur during the main site visit. Before the site visit, panel members receive reports from the Review Director of any overseas visits.

Panel members will prepare a set of suggested questions for each interview session, with special attention given to the Indicator for which he/she is responsible. Panel members should also produce comments on the additional documentation submitted by the college.

4.6. THE SITE VISIT

The main purposes of the site visit are to allow the Review Panel to test the most important claims made in the self-evaluation report, to triangulate evidence and to acquire further insight into the institution's operation through first-hand investigation. The site visit also provides an opportunity for peer reviewers and those directly engaged in the programme to discuss the programme, the effectiveness of existing arrangements and the development of new internal systems for quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement. The value of the site visit – both to the institution and DHR – is closely related to the quality of the preparation, the information available, the dialogue and organization of time. The site visit for a single programme is normally arranged over two days, using the typical

outline visit schedule (Appendix 4). However, depending on the number and diversity of programmes offered within the college, the site visit length and programme will be adjusted accordingly.

Review panel members are not permitted to accept gifts from institutions. Hospitality provided to the Panel during the site visit should be modest and appropriate for a 'working' business meeting.

4.6.1. Panel Preparations and Discussions (Day 0)

The day before formal interviews start, the Panel is briefed and then meets privately to prepare for the site visit. At these meetings, the Panel:

- receives a face-to-face briefing on the Bahraini context for the quality reviews and has the opportunity to ask about relevant issues and facts
- receives a face-to-face briefing on the main features of the Programmes-within College Reviews Framework and what is expected from the Review Panel
- discusses its members' preliminary evaluation of the portfolio(s) submitted by the institution
- discusses the additional material received since the portfolio meeting, including any visit reports
- notes any information that will be available on-site during the site visit
- reviews arrangements for the site visit and the requirements for professional conduct by the Panel
- plans the interview sessions in detail, especially those for the first day.

By the end of this meeting, panel members may not have reached agreement on substantive issues, e.g. whether a programme under review meets the sub-indicator requirements or whether the programme is showing commendable good practice in a specific area or doing no more than would be expected of any higher education institution. Such differences, which are part of the process of applying professional judgement, must be resolved by the end of the site visit, so plans should be made for questioning and other forms of investigation to achieve this. The Chairperson(s) and the Review Director(s) have particular responsibility for ensuring that issues are resolved through panel-only sessions during the site visit.

4.6.2. Guidance on conducting the site visit

The site visit always includes time for meetings (Appendix 4). The meetings with students and staff are essential to the Programme Review. Some meetings are best pre-arranged and others may be arranged at short notice. *Ad hoc* meetings are also conducted as detailed below. The reviewers will also wish to spend time reading the documentation provided and

making notes. Course portfolios and samples of students' assessed work are a vital part of this supporting documentation. Reviewers will wish to scrutinize the sample together with the question sheets, marking schemes and any written comments and feedback to students.

The institution will be expected to provide suitable room for the visiting reviewers that is sufficient for the Panel and the range of supporting documentation. The room should offer worktables, power supply for laptops, a coffee machine, water and light refreshments. It would also be helpful to include a PC with web access and printer. The visiting team will need access to photocopying. The room should also be secure to protect the documentation. In addition, the institution will also need to arrange access to suitable meeting rooms during the site visit in line with the schedule of meetings.

The institution should ensure that all documents are readily available for the reviewers and provide access, if available, to the programme website or to a flash memory. Also, an index of all supporting documentation is required.

The reviewers will meet regularly as a panel but may also divide their attention across different programmes within the college or to make enquiries under one or more of the four Indicators in the Framework for Evaluation. At the end of the first day the Panel will meet formally to assess progress, review the evidence base and set priorities for further enquiries. The final panel meeting on the last day will review the evidence, agree a generic comment on the quality of the self-evaluation report(s) and the supporting evidence, and refer to the Framework for Evaluation to make judgements that include a set of conclusions in relation to each programme reviewed.

During the site visit, panel-only review sessions are held periodically. During these sessions, the key points from the previous session(s) are agreed by the Panel. The Panel also reminds itself of the focus of the subsequent session(s). At the end of the day, the Panel meets to discuss the day's overall findings and plan in detail the questions for the next day's interviews. There is a longer panel-only meeting on the final day of the visit, to discuss findings before the end of the visit.

During the site visit, each panel member, under the guidance of the chairperson of the programme, will compile a record of the evidence provided and draft the section(s) of the programme Review Report that is his/her specific area of responsibility. Though, Indicators are divided among panel members to indicate the prime lead for each Indicator, it is important to reach consensus amongst panel members, so that the Review Report and judgement reflects the opinion of the whole Panel, not just individual members. Panel members will also contribute to a brief set of conclusions, including the agreed summative judgement, a summary of identified good practice and any gaps or weaknesses leading to recommendations for improvement.

The chairperson for each reviewed programme co-ordinates the reviewers' writing to produce a working draft of the Review Report for each programme, ensuring that it is shared with the Panel. The chairperson of each programme also drafts parts of the oral feedback and prepares the first draft Review Report.

4.6.3. Interview sessions

Meetings between faculty members, other employees, students, alumni and other stakeholders and the visiting Panel are scheduled as part of a site visit. The schedule of pre-arranged meetings should be agreed between the college and the DHR before the start of the site visit. It may, however, be desirable to arrange an additional meeting during the review to address any emerging matters. The time and place of the meeting, its focus, who is expected to attend and if necessary any special agenda, should be discussed and agreed by the review chairperson and the review contact person.

Meetings are a desirable means of confirming information and conducting open dialogue and can be the most efficient way of augmenting or clarifying information already provided. They should, however, be kept to the minimum necessary to complete the review. The review chairperson may chair the meeting or assign one of the reviewers to lead it. Shortly after a meeting, the reviewers will reflect on the discussion, aggregate the information derived from it with other information, and consider the completeness of the evidence base and any need for further discussions.

The focus of each meeting will be derived from the Framework for Evaluation, the self-evaluation report and the analysis of the self-evaluation report by the visiting peer reviewers.

The views of students and other stakeholders, including graduates of the programme and employers of graduates, represent an important part of the evidence collected in the review process. The reviewers will be focusing on key points emerging from their reading of the self-evaluation report and supporting information. They will wish to reflect on the expressed views following the meeting and consider the full range of information when making their judgements.

Meetings with students should be separate from meetings with graduates and employers. In all meetings the lines of enquiry should be selective, based on the self-evaluation report and information emerging in the review site visit. The interviewed students should include a representative group of students across all levels with a range of modules within the programme as well as members of the student council. Dialogue should be constructive and should avoid personalising criticism of staff. The Review Panel may decide to break a large group into smaller groups with one reviewer leading each. Questions from reviewers should be open and unbiased.

4.6.4. *Ad hoc* Interviews

Ad hoc interviews are conducted with staff and students in relation to the reviewed programmes, independent of the institutions influence. To achieve this, during the site visit, panel members will tour the campus and seek to speak with students and staff randomly. The institution will be requested to distribute widely as well as post notices, prepared by DHR, to inform staff and students about the review site visit and the *ad hoc* interviews. The following rules apply to these *ad hoc* interviews:

- i. the panel member will introduce him/herself to the interviewee, the purpose of the interview, and request his/her permission to conduct the interview
- ii. the interview will be logged in a formal *ad hoc* interview worksheet for each interview which will be shared with other panel members and kept with the Review Director
- iii. interviews should be conducted in confidence and the duration of each interview should not exceed 10 minutes
- iv. panel members will not intrude on teaching sessions
- v. *ad hoc* interviews may be conducted in staff offices and in common areas such as the library, the cafeteria and public meeting rooms
- vi. findings of *ad hoc* interviews need to be triangulated in order for them to be used in the review.

4.6.5. Guidance on the reporting of Outcomes

The value of Programmes-within-College Reviews to the institution depends on the quality of the reporting of the outcomes of the programme review(s). The outcomes are summarized in Section 3.3 above. They should be evidence-based, arising from open discussion and resting on the professional opinions of the peer reviewers guided by the published methodology.

During the site visit, the chairperson together with the Review Director for each programme will ensure that emerging matters that deserve further attention and any substantive issues are addressed in meetings with the appropriate responsible persons. Although conclusions will not be announced at the oral feedback meeting, the openness and transparency of the review over the two-day site visit should mean that there are no surprises for the institution. Moreover, the chairperson(s) of the Panel will ensure that the Review Director(s) are aware of the preliminary discussions and conclusions that the Panel is reaching at the time of the site visit.

For each programme under review, the Panel is to evaluate whether the programme satisfies each Indicator and a conclusion is to be reached by the Review Panel in the final panel meeting which will be either:

- i. the programme satisfies all four Indicators and gives confidence, or
- ii. there is limited confidence because up to two Indicators are not satisfied (excluding Indicator 1), or
- iii. there is no confidence in the programme because more than two Indicators are not satisfied or Indicator 1 is not satisfied.

More details about judgement is given in Section 3.2 of this Handbook.

The Review Panel will also agree on recommendations for the programme's improvement. These recommendations will reflect the existing improvement plan for the programme and the balance between identified good practice and any expressions of limited confidence or lack of confidence stated in the conclusions.

4.6.6. Oral Feedback

The site visit ends with an overarching oral feedback meeting chaired by a nominated chairperson and attended by representatives of the institution's management, and any other member the college sees fit. All panel members and Review Directors attend the meeting, but the nominated chairperson makes the presentation.

The oral feedback meeting is intended to offer immediate qualitative information to the college in line with international good practice. It is not an occasion for further discussion on evaluations. The written Programmes-within-College Review Report(s) that follows the site visit will broadly reflect the key points made in the oral feedback. However, with the benefit of reflection and further consideration of the evidence by the Review Panel members, the panel members may modify their evaluations or the way they are presented in written form. The Review Director(s) will ensure that the oral feedback is in line with the QQA policies.

4.7. THE PROGRAMMES-WITHIN COLLEGE REVIEWS REPORT(S)

A written Review Report, for each reviewed programme, will be finalized by the programme review chairperson and will be endorsed by the Review Panel. The Report is sent to the DHR Programme Review Director who is responsible for checking it for completeness and compliance with published methods. If necessary the chairperson or other panel members may be asked to clarify or justify statements in the draft report. Once the Director is satisfied with the Report, it will be served at the DHR Academic Committee for discussion and approval.

A draft report will be approved and adopted by DHR when the DHR Academic Committee is satisfied that:

- it is endorsed by all members of the Review Panel
- its structure is in line with the template
- its scope is appropriate to the programme being reviewed
- it offers evaluations and conclusions that are evidence-based
- there is consistency between the evaluation in the main text and the conclusions.

At this point, the draft Report becomes a report of the QQA. A copy of the draft report will be sent to the institution inviting it to check it for factual accuracy and comment on the findings if needed. The institution will respond to DHR within two weeks. The institution's comments will be dealt with according to QQA procedures, as described below, and changes, if needed, will be made to the Report before it is served to the Academic Committee of the QQA. After approval at this committee, the Report is finalized. The final Report is sent to the Board of the QQA for approval and to the Cabinet for endorsement after which it is published.

Review Reports will be published on the QQA website in both languages, Arabic and English. www.qqa.edu.bh

4.8. FACTUAL ACCURACY AND COMMENTS

An opportunity will be given for higher education institutions to check the definitive draft Report for factual accuracy and to make comments on findings, if needed. Factual errors, if any, will be adjusted accordingly.

The institution's comments will be sent to the panel chairperson for the specific programme who will convey, in writing, his/her conclusions in this regard. The DHR will study both the institution's comments and the panel chairperson's reply and send formal feedback on the submitted comments to the institution. This process will be in accordance with QQA policies and procedures.

5. FOLLOW-UP TO THE REVIEWS

Programmes that have been subjected to Programmes-within-College Reviews need to submit improvement plans to DHR. However, only programmes receiving 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' will be subject to follow-up visit(s).

5.1 IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Irrespective of the outcomes of the Programmes-within-College Review Reports, institutions will be expected to submit to DHR/QQA an improvement plan three months after publication of the Reports, which shows for each programme how the recommendations will be addressed. Guidelines on how to develop and submit improvement plans is given in Appendix 5. The improvement plan should lead to further enhancement of the programmes. This process will be in accordance with QQA policies and procedures.

5.2 FOLLOW-UP VISITS

In cases where 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' judgements are given in the Review Report, the college will receive a maximum of two follow-up visits to measure the progress made against recommendations. This process will be as follows:

All programmes having a 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' judgement will be subjected to a maximum of two follow-up visits. The follow-up process is designed to deliver evidence-based reports that capture the impact of recent developments in the programme and progress made since the DHR's Programme Review. The output of this follow-up will be a published report which will indicate the level of progress achieved by the college. The time frame for the follow-up visits and the number of these visits will vary depending on the judgement received and the progress achieved by the institution respectively. Details of this are given in Appendix 6. There will be two phases for the follow-up:

Phase 1: Desk analysis of evidence by DHR. The evidence base comprises the programme Review Report, the programme improvement plan submitted by the institution, a progress report and supporting materials generated by the college to report on its progress to-date in addressing the recommendations stated in the programme Review Report. The institution will be informed of the details, procedures and timing of the follow-up visit.

Phase 2: A follow-up site visit to the programme, normally for one day, leading to a brief written report. The site visit will be conducted by a member of DHR and a subject expert. The report will indicate the level of progress achieved by the college against recommendations identified in the original Review Report. The college is expected to use the report to support continuous improvement in the programme.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework is based on the panel members being peer reviewers of the programmes under review. Peer review is an essential part of these reviews. This section sets out the role of the college contact person, review directors, peer reviewers (panel members) and the review chairpersons. It includes the person specification for panel members and review chairpersons and criteria for the composition of review panels.

Review by peers means that the institution has a reasonable expectation that the visiting reviewers should hold, or have held, equivalent professional positions to those with whom they conduct their enquiries or senior management positions in higher education institutions. The peers should have the confidence of the institution and, when offering professional opinions on their area of expertise, they should be credible in the eyes of the institution. Peer review also offers safety in numbers for the process in that the Panel as a whole, guided by the review chairperson, apply the published method and reach a consensus on the outcomes.

The effective contribution of peer reviewers is underpinned by the use of the *Programmes-within-College Review Handbook*.

6.1. COLLEGE CONTACT PERSON

The DHR will invite each college participating in Programmes-within-College Reviews to nominate a contact person for the review process. This should be a senior member of the programme management team. His/her role is to coordinate the process and optimize the internal and external review as part of the cycle of continuing review and continuing improvement.

The contact person should be well placed in the college to ensure that it benefits from the programme review(s) as part of its development of an internal quality assurance system. The DHR expects the institution, guided by the *Institutional Review Handbook* and *the Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook*, to be able to develop appropriate policies, plans and procedures to establish a sustainable system for continuing review and continuing improvement.

In preparation for, during, and after the external review site visit the contact person will ensure that:

- The scope of the programme(s) to be reviewed is clearly defined.
- All relevant information is collated and accessible by faculty members and visiting peer reviewers.

- The self-evaluation report(s) together with any supplementary documentation meet the requirements of the *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook* and are submitted in time to DHR.
- The visiting Review Panel is provided with a suitable room(s) for panel meetings together with access to documentation and facilities.
- The institution responds promptly and accurately to requests by the Review Panel for additional information and/or clarification of information provided.
- The draft Programme Review Report(s), when sent to the institution for checking on matters of factual accuracy, are checked and returned promptly to DHR.
- The institution considers and responds constructively to the Programme Review Report(s), including preparing an improvement plan or modifying an existing improvement plan in the light of the outcomes of the review.
- Arrangements for follow-up are made in cooperation with DHR.

The contact person is expected to be available throughout the site visit.

6.2. APPOINTMENT OF PEER REVIEWERS (PANEL MEMBERS)

All candidates for the role of peer reviewer will be invited to submit their CVs. The DHR will acknowledge all submissions and subsequently notify candidates of the outcomes. Reviewers will be recruited and briefed in line with published criteria to ensure that they contribute effectively to the process.

The criteria for appointment are:

- All reviewers should meet the specified criteria.
- Reviewers will be allocated to reviews that are within their competence.
- Reviewers will not be assigned to a review where there is a valid conflict of interest raised by them, or the institution.
- Reviewers will make themselves available for the whole of the scheduled review.

6.3. ROLES OF PEER REVIEWERS (PANEL MEMBERS)

The peer reviewers will work as members of a review panel. DHR will invite one reviewer to be the programme review chairperson. For diversified colleges with a large number of programmes offerings, the DHR may invite one of the chairpersons to chair the whole process.

The review chairperson's roles are to:

- take a lead in the application of the *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook* in the review

- coordinate the assembly of evidence and verify that there is a sound evidence base
- guide emerging and definitive conclusions made by the Panel
- ensure that DHR receives a draft Review Report of the assigned programme on time that meets the requirements set out in the *Programmes-within-College Review Handbook*
- prepare a written document in response to the college comments on definitive draft.

For each review, the reviewers will:

- provide a written initial commentary from their reading of the institution's documentation
- attend panel meetings arranged by DHR
- attend the site visit for the full schedule of events
- take a lead in areas of responsibility designated by the review chairperson with regard to: gathering evidence; chairing scheduled meetings with HEI representatives as directed by the review chairperson; preparing and building upon initial commentaries; sharing evidence and formative opinions within the Review Panel; drafting sets of tentative conclusions on strengths and areas that require improvement; providing paragraphs before the end of the site visit; and assisting the programme review chairperson with revisions to the draft Programme Review Report(s) after the site visit
- for each part of the Framework for Evaluation designated by the review chairperson: identify sources of evidence, including any gaps; evaluate the information and supporting evidence available; identify the main strengths and weaknesses or issues that deserve further attention; and record their evidence and findings, cross referenced to the sources
- contribute to the Panel's considerations of the whole evidence base and judgements towards a collective panel decision on the extent to which the Indicators are met
- complete evaluations of the Programmes-within-College Reviews process for the DHR.

6.4. PERSONAL PEER REVIEWER SPECIFICATION

Reviewers need to have sufficient status and reputation for their views to be respected in the academic community. They also need to bring to the process a high order of skills in communication and evaluation.

6.4.1. General requirements

The following points represent a core specification:

A number of the following are required:

- academic expertise in one or more disciplines that relate to the programme(s) scheduled for review
- academic experience, including successful teaching practice and/or quality assurance, accreditation, audit or review, within the last five years
- those in professional practice in a relevant discipline with recent experience of academic activity may also be considered
- current or recent experience in quality management and improvement projects or systems which have made an impact
- proven abilities in communication in Arabic and/or English including: listening; joining in group discussions; respecting the views of others; leading (chairing) group discussions; rapid reading with understanding; and concise clear writing to tight deadlines
- competence in using and interpreting numbers including: the accurate analysis of data sets; verification and reconciliation techniques; presentation of valid data in support of a judgement
- proven ability in evaluation including: appraisal of the context; identifying logical and irrational argument; making sound judgements based on facts; adjusting judgements in the light of additional information or well-argued alternative views in a professional context; and a willingness to justify judgements
- a favourable disposition to the national initiatives to improve the quality and academic standards of higher education.

Desirable

- IT skills, including the use of laptops or notebooks, internet and intranet, MS Word
- current or recent experience in moderation of marking, external evaluation and/or formal validation of graduate attainment
- effective practice in curricular development, including writing outcome-related curricular documents, action plans for programmes and courses improvements or strategies for learning, teaching and assessment.
- acknowledged track record in research or other scholarly activities
- recognized contributions to society or the community within the normal range of academic activities (e.g. projects, consultancy, teaching, coaching or mentoring)
- advisory or interventionist functions as an internal or external consultant or change agent in higher education or related professional fields.

6.4.2. Panel Chairperson

Review chairpersons will meet the above requirements and in addition will demonstrate:

- proven qualities of leadership and the management of people and information in task groups or projects
- ability to implement procedures and protocols consistently yet fairly to accommodate local circumstances
- effective chairing of reviews and meetings including thorough planning, collaboration with other key participants and time management
- ability to assess the evidence available and the validity of emerging judgements
- ability to write cogently to deadlines and edit the writing of reviewers to meet the specification for the Review Report
- ability to evaluate the review and make constructive suggestions for the continuing improvement of the method.
- on request by DHR, the ability to make additional contributions to the process through, for example, contributions to conferences, editing and checking the draft Review Report(s) generated by others, trawling reports in order to draft overview or summary reports, and the preparation of materials for briefing reviewers and institutions.

6.5. ROLES OF REVIEW DIRECTORS

The Review Directors' roles are to:

- analyse portfolio documents submitted by the institution .
- arrange and attend the portfolio meeting.
- ensure that panel members are informed about the Bahraini context of the review.
- co-ordinate with the panel members and other Review Director(s), when applicable, in identifying extra evidence needed and developing a site visit programme.
- conduct the preparatory visit(s) on behalf of the Panel.
- ensure the application of the *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook* in the review.
- ensure that DHR receives draft Review Report(s) on time that meets the requirements set out in the *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook*.
- prepare definitive draft Review Report(s) to be served to the DHR Academic Committee for approval.
- discuss issues raised by the QQA Academic Committee with the Panel as needed.
- ensure that the translated Review Report is a correct translation of the original.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 : GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATES 1 AND 2 FOR PROGRAMME SELF-EVALUATION REPORTS

Guidance on self-evaluation

Self-evaluation is a central part of any programme review. The guidance concerning self-evaluation offered in the QQA's *Institutional Review Handbook* applies to the self-evaluation for Programmes-within-College Reviews. The self-evaluation should be regarded in the college as a sustainable process rather than a one-off project for DHR. It offers benefits to the programmes and the college, as well as the visiting review panel, if it is approached as a team effort. These benefits include the clarification of programme aims; the sharing of insights into the programmes and how they achieve the desired aims; enhanced engagements with a range of stakeholders; and more effective organization of information, including the development of data and indicators in step with institutional review. If the self-evaluation process generates a plan for improvement, this may be included as an Appendix.

The report(s) should be evidence-based, analytical and self-critical, and give highlights of good practice and any identified challenges or weaknesses that are being, or need to be, addressed. The structure should be in line with template 2.

Template 1: Summary of the programme and data set

Part 1: Administrative information

1. Programme title:
2. Award/degree:
3. Department(s) responsible:
4. Programme co-ordinator:
5. External evaluator:
6. Year of operation being reported:
7. Date this report is submitted:
8. Date this report is approved:
9. Approved by:

Part 2: Statistical information

1. Number of students admitted to the programme in the last three years (by year or semester)
 - i. admitted in orientation/foundation
 - ii. admitted in Year 1
 - iii. admitted direct entry to Year 2 or 3 (transferred students)
 - iv. part-time/full-time
 - v. male/female
 - vi. nationality (Bahrain, GCC, Arab countries, others)

2. Number of students registered in the programme in the last three years (by year or semester)
 - i. part-time/full-time
 - ii. male/female
 - iii. nationality (Bahrain, GCC, Arab countries, others)

3. Number of administrative staff in relation to the programme in the last three and current academic years (specify year)
 - i. nationality
 - ii. gender
 - iii. certificates
 - iv. part-time/full-time
 - v. % time serving the programme

4. Number of academic staff contributing to the programme in the last three and current academic years (specify year)
 - i. rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, graduate assistant, etc.)
 - ii. nationality
 - iii. gender
 - iv. certificates
 - v. part-time/full-time
 - vi. % time serving the programme

5. Number of graduates in the last three years (by year) and number of students expect to complete the programme this year

- i. Graded Point Average (GPA)
- ii. Length of study period for each year's graduates (Mean, Range (max- min))
- iii. Grading: no. and percentage in each grade

Excellent %
Very Good %
Good %
Pass %
Fail %

6. Discussion of statistical information

Do the results produce a normal distribution or is there a skew? Discuss reasons:

.....

.....

7. First destinations of graduates

Give percentages of the graduates of the most recent three years who have (by year):

- i. proceeded to appropriate employment:
- ii. proceeded to other employment:
- iii. undertaken postgraduate study:
- iv. engaged in other types of activity:
- v. unknown first destination:

Part 3: Programme aims and intended learning outcomes

(this information may be attached as a programme specification)

- 1. programme aims
- 2. specific intended learning outcomes grouped by knowledge and skills
- 3. list of courses which contribute to the programme.

Part 4: Academic and Administrative Staff (this is submitted for the whole college)

1. Number of academic staff in the college in the last three as well as current academic years (by year)
 - i. rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, graduate assistant, etc.)
 - ii. nationality
 - iii. gender
 - iv. certificates
 - v. part-time/full-time
 - vi. % time serving the programme
2. Details of academic staff currently contributing to each specific programme
 - i. rank (professor, associate professor, assistant professor, senior lecturer, lecturer, graduate assistant, etc.)
 - ii. nationality
 - iii. gender
 - iv. college
 - v. department
 - vi. specialization (major and minor)
 - vii. % time contributing to the programme
3. Details of administrative staff in the college in the last three as well as current academic years (by year)
 - i. nationality
 - ii. gender
 - iii. Job title
 - iv. certificates
 - v. part-time/full-time
4. Other (please specify):

Template 2: Outline of self-evaluation report

For each programme under review a self-evaluation report needs to be submitted in a template that follows the Programme Review Indicators. The self-evaluation report may attach appendices to provide greater detail on the programme and its contributing courses and on the infrastructure that supports the programme. It may also be accompanied by an improvement plan. The structure set out below is:

- background
- evaluation
- conclusions
- improvement plan.

Background

A brief summary of how long the programme has been offered, any substantial revisions, the context in which the programme is offered (labour market, collaboration with other organizations and the outcomes of any recent reviews and/or accreditation). The mission statements of the institution and college should be included.

Evaluation

A summary of the value of each of the characteristics as set out in the Programme Review Indicators. Avoid description and highlight good practice, current developments and any gaps, weaknesses and other matters being addressed or requiring improvement. Give evidence, examples and references to supporting documentation where appropriate. This will be guided with the four main Indicators and sub-indicators given in Section 3.1 of this Handbook.

Conclusions

The conclusion should include:

- identified good practice
- gaps and matters to be addressed.

Improvement Plan

Attach a current improvement plan and indicate its status (e.g. draft for further discussion, or adopted by Faculty Council, or already implemented). (See Appendix 5 for a suggested layout.)

APPENDIX 2 : TEMPLATE FOR PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

DIRECTORATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEWS: PROGRAMMES-WITHIN-COLLEGE REVIEWS

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

This Programme Specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. It is supported by a specification for each course that contributes to the programme.

1. Teaching Institution	
2. College	
3. Department/Centre	
4. Programme Title	
5. Title of Final Award	
6. Modes of Attendance offered	
7. Accreditation	
8. Other external influences	
9. Date of production/revision of this specification	
10.Aims of the Programme	
11. Learning Outcomes, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Methods	
A.Knowledge and Understanding	
A1	
A2	
A3	
A4	
A5	
A6	

B. Subject-specific skills
B1
B2
B3
Teaching and learning methods
Assessment methods
C. Critical thinking skills
Teaching and learning methods
Assessment methods
D. General and transferable skills (other skills relevant to employability and personal development)
Teaching and learning methods
Assessment methods

12. Programme Structures*				13. Awards and Credits*
Level /Year	Course or Module Code	Course or Module Title	Credit Rating	
				Master's Degree Requires xxx credits
				Bachelor Degree Requires xxx credits
				Entry Year
* Delete rows not applicable to this Programme Specification				
14. Personal development planning				
15. Admission criteria (state clearly any regulations concerning direct entry to years after year 1)				
16. Key sources of information about the programme				
•				
•				
•				
•				
•				

B. Subject-specific skills
B1
B2
B3
Teaching and learning methods
Assessment methods
C. Critical thinking skills
Teaching and learning methods
Assessment methods
D. General and transferable skills (other skills relevant to employability and personal development)
•
•
•
•
•

APPENDIX 4 :

TEMPLATE FOR TYPICAL SITE VISIT SCHEDULE FOR A SINGLE PROGRAMME

The typical site visit schedule for the review of a single programme is designed for two days. This does not include Day 0 of the site visit where the Panel meets in the QQA offices. Since all programmes offered by the college will be reviewed simultaneously, the Review Director(s) will use the output of the portfolio meeting to draft a site visit programme which will be finalized through discussion with panel members and the college representatives in the preparatory visit(s). Depending on the college size and the type of programmes, the site visit might be between two to five days. The site visit involves pre-arranged meetings. The responsibility for arranging these meetings and fitting the template to the circumstances rests with the Review Director(s), who will agree the arrangements with the contact person before the site visit.

Below is a table indicating a typical site visit schedule for the review of a single programme. The typical site visits will normally commence at 08:30 on day 1. Start times of pre-arranged meetings are indicated. Pre-arranged meetings should not normally last more than one hour. The schedule should not completely fill all times with meetings, but leave space for additional activities by peer reviewers including preparing for meetings, updating notes and records, reading on-site evidence, and drafting paragraphs for the draft Programme Review Report(s).

Session	Time	Activity
Day 1		
1	09:00	Welcome and introductions; brief introduction to the review (purposes, intended outcomes, use of evidence and self-evaluation report) – College Team
2	09:30	Curriculum; discussion with faculty members
3	11:00	Meeting with a group of students
4	12:30	Efficiency: tour of resources
5	14:00	Review Panel meeting: scrutiny of additional documentation including sample of students' assessed work
6	15:00	Efficiency: meeting with faculty members
7	16:00	Review Panel meeting: review of the evidence and any gaps or matters to follow-up
8	17:00	Meeting with external stakeholders (sample of graduates, employers, other partners)
Day 2		
9	08:30	Review Panel meeting: summary of Day 1 findings, addressing any gaps, adjust the schedule for Day 2 if required
10	09:00	Academic standards: meeting with faculty members
11	10:30	Effectiveness of quality management and assurance: meeting with faculty members
12	12:00	Review Panel meeting: review of evidence and any matters still to be addressed
13	14:00	Flexible time to pursue any matters arising
14	14:30	Review Panel final meeting: decisions on outcomes and drafting oral feedback
15	16:30	Oral feedback by review chairperson to representatives of the institution's management, contact person, head of departments and faculty members
	17:00	Close

APPENDIX 5 :GUIDANCE AND TEMPLATE FOR IMPROVEMENT PLAN

All colleges that have undergone a Quality Review by DHR are required to prepare an improvement plan for each programme reviewed subsequent to the publication of the Review Report, and in line with the guidelines outlined in the *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook*. Upon receiving the final Review Report from the DHR, colleges are expected to reflect on what actions will be undertaken to address the report's recommendations and plan for enhancing the overall quality of their provision; they are required to link proposed actions explicitly to the Review Report's findings, particularly in regards to:

- rectifying areas of weaknesses
- sustaining areas of strengths.

The college is responsible for identifying and prioritizing areas for improvement as well as implementing the planned enhancements; it is imperative to demonstrate to DHR that these plans are robust and are achievable.

The improvement plan needs to be viewed as an integral part of a college strategic plan. Once implemented, it will serve as a valuable strategic tool that assists the college in outlining the activities required to achieve its quality improvement goals. The improvement plan should also be considered as a 'living' document, with new improvement priorities determined as previous improvement goals are accomplished and documented.

Developing the Quality Improvement Action Plan

Prior to the development of the improvement plan, it is advisable that the college first discusses the DHR Review Report with all stakeholders in order to ascertain a common understanding of the Report's findings and gain multiple perspectives on how the improvement process will proceed. To maximize the benefit of this process, a senior staff member should be designated for the coordination between various stakeholders as well as for the development and implementation of the improvement plan.

The improvement plan is a summary document that presents the various components of the planned improvement process in a succinct and concise SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timed). It is recommended that a tabulated action plan is presented according to the following steps:

- Based on the feedback of all stakeholders on the Review Report findings, improvement goals are set and arranged in order of priority.
- The strategies for achieving each improvement goals are subsequently identified with the corresponding activities clearly outlined.
- For each activity, the persons to be responsible and/or accountable for implementation are listed.
- The resources required to accomplish each activity are detailed.
- The timescale expected to achieve each activity is indicated.
- Targets and criteria to evidence successful implementation of each activity are set.

- Expected costs for implementing each activity are estimated.
- A date for completion of each activity is assigned.

In addition to the above mentioned components, the improvement plan should also include a brief overview that addresses:

- the impact of the report findings on the institution’s day-to-day operation
- how the college plans to integrate the recommendations into its strategic plan with a reference to whether the current mission, vision and strategic goals would need to be revised
- justifications for the prioritization order of the improvement goals
- major implications of implementing the Review Report’s recommendations on the institution’s budgeting and resourcing
- assignment of responsibility with regards to the overall follow-up and monitoring of the improvement plan.

Improvement process

- i. Upon receiving the Review Report(s) from DHR, colleges should discuss the Report’s findings with all stakeholders and designate a senior staff member to be responsible for the development and implementation of the improvement plan(s).
- ii. The finalized improvement plan(s) should be submitted to DHR three months after the publication of the Review Report(s).
- iii. The submitted improvement plan(s) will be analysed by the assigned Review Director(s) in consultation with the DHR Executive Director. The aim of this analysis is to determine the extent to which the college has successfully planned to address the Review Report(s) findings.
- iv. A meeting at the college will be scheduled one month following the receipt of the improvement plan(s). The focus of this meeting is to discuss the plan with regards to whether it is sufficiently detailed and adequately addresses the Review Report findings. If DHR is not satisfied with the proposed improvement strategies and activities, the college will be required to revise its plan in light of these discussions.

A suggested template for presentation of the improvement plan components.

Improvement Goals (in order of priority)	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Required resources	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Estimated costs	Completion Date

APPENDIX 6 : FOLLOW-UP VISIT(S) FLOWCHART

