هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of
Higher Education Reviews
Programme Review Report

University College of Bahrain
Department of Business Administration
Master of Business Administration
Kingdom of Bahrain

Site Visit Date: 12 – 14 December 2022
HA087-C3-R087

Table of Contents

Acronyms

APR	Academic Programme Review
BA	Business Administration
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
IAB	Industrial Advisory Board
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LTARC	Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee
LTE	Learning, Teaching, and Enhancement
LOGSIS	Student Information System
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PC	Personal Computer
PEO	Programme Educational Objective
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QAAO	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UCB	University College of Bahrain
UILO	University Intended Learning Outcome

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　*3*

I. Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews, where the whole institution is assessed; and the Academic Programme Reviews (APRs), where the quality of teaching, learning and academic standards are assessed in academic programmes within various colleges according to specific standards and indicators as reflected in its Framework.

Following the revision of the APR Framework at the end of Cycle 1 in accordance with the BQA procedure, the revised APR Framework (Cycle 2) was endorsed as per the Council of Ministers' Resolution No.17 of 2019. Thereof, in the academic year (2019-2020), the DHR commenced its second cycle of programme reviews.

The Cycle 2 APR Review Framework is based on four main Standards and 21 Indicators, which form the basis of the APR Reports of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The **four** standards that are used to determine whether or not a programme meets international standards are as follows:

Standard 1: **The Learning Programme**

Standard 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

Standard 3: **Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**

Standard 4: **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') decides whether each indicator, within a standard, is 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed'. From these judgements on the indicators, the Panel additionally determines whether each of the four standards is 'Satisfied' or 'Not Satisfied', thus leading to the Programme's overall judgement, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

Criteria	Judgement
All four Standards are satisfied	Confidence
Two or three Standards are satisfied, including Standard 1	Limited Confidence
One or no Standard is satisfied	No Confidence
All cases where **Standard 1** is not satisfied	

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 4

The APR Review Report begins with providing the profile of the Programme under review, followed by a brief outline of the judgement received for each indicator, standard, and the overall judgement.

The main section of the report is an analysis of the status of the programme, at the time of its actual review, in relation to the review standards, indicators and their underlying expectations.

The report ends with a Conclusion and a list of Appreciations and Recommendations.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *5*

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	University College of Bahrain
College/ Department*	Department of Business Administration
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Qualification Approval Number	1649-03
NQF Level	
Validity Period on NQF	
Number of Units*	10 courses + thesis/business project (36 credit hours)
NQF Credit	
Programme Aims*	**PEO1**. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of management theory and practice in the context of business corporations and environment **PEO2**. Demonstrate the research and analytical skills in the context of business corporations and environment **PEO3**. To provide effective ethical leadership and strategic governance skills in navigating a business institution **PEO4**. Communicate effectively and professionally to make informed decisions in a business setting
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	**PILO1**. Demonstrate critical knowledge and strategic understanding of principles, concepts, and theories across business disciplines and specialised business management fields. **PILO2**. Apply the specialised techniques of business principles to responsibly deal with a complexity business institution. **PILO3**. Develop comprehensive solutions to business problems by synthesizing information and generating creative and ethical options in the business environment. **PILO4**. Use appropriate ICT resources professionally for collecting quantitative/qualitative data and reflect critically on the analysis of current issues in business management **PILO5**. Use written and oral communication skills to effectively communicate with different levels of stakeholders in a business institution. **PILO6.** Exercise teamwork and leadership skills in a variety of working groups for strategic decision making in a business institution.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *6*

III. Judgement Summary

<div style="text-align:center; border:1px solid #000; background:#dde3c8; padding:1em;">

The Programme's Judgement:
No Confidence

</div>

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	**The Learning Programme**	**Not Satisfied**
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
Standard 2	**Efficiency of the Programme**	**Not Satisfied**
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Not Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Not Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 3	**Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**	**Not Satisfied**
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Not Applicable

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   7

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Addressed
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Partially Addressed
Standard 4	**Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**	**Not Satisfied**
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Partially Addressed

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *8*

IV. Standards and Indicators

<div style="border:1px solid #000; background:#dde3cc; padding:1em;">

Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

</div>

Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

There is a clear academic planning framework for the programme, reflected in clear aims which relate to the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the college.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The University College of Bahrain (UCB) has an Academic Planning Framework (2018-2024), however, this framework does not contain any information about programme planning and development at the Institution and is almost identical in content to its Strategic Plan. The Panel noted a Development of New Programmes of Study procedure, but it is dated 2016 and has references to committees which are obsolete in the current structure. There is also a quality management system, which includes academic policies and procedures, which guide the design and review of the MBA programme on the basis of relevant information drawn from discussions with the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) and compiled through an annual monitoring and review process. However, some of these policies and procedures are not consistently implemented as indicated in different parts of this Report. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should develop and implement a clear programme planning framework involving a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., alumni, external reviewers) to ensure that the MBA programme remains relevant and fit for purpose.

- UCB has an Institutional Risk Management Policy that details key risks and how they are managed. These risks are related to academics, finances, health and safety, and the physical infrastructure. Accordingly, as reported in interviews, the Department regularly identifies the risks that are relevant to the quality of delivery of the MBA programme. However, the Panel noted a lack of evidence indicating regular updates on the identified risks' achievement/progress, as required by the Institutional Risk Management Policy. The Panel also notes that one of the main risks UCB is currently facing is the lack of sufficient faculty to teach on the programme (see Indicator 2.2), as was reported in interviews. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should update the MBA Risk Register to

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *9*

include actual and current programme risks, and urgently deploy effective mitigation strategies to address the insufficiency of full-time faculty on the programme.

- The title of the programme, Master of Business Administration, with emphasis/concentration between parentheses, clearly reflects the nature of the specialisation. As examined in the evidence, all the official documents such as, certificates, MBA student handbook, as well as UCB website carry the same title.

- The MBA has not yet been placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) but has appropriate Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) serving as aims that underpin its design and are aligned to the department and the institutional missions. According to the Annual and Periodic Program Review Policy, the programme aims are reviewed with every periodic review, which takes place every four years. The Programme Specification includes a mapping between the PEOs and the PILOs, which are themselves mapped to the University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs) and the graduate attributes.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and these are appropriate for the level of the degree and meet the NQF requirements.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- There MBA programme has five graduate attributes developed with the objective of graduating students who are knowledgeable, collaborative, socially responsible, professional, life-long learners. There is a clear mapping of these attributes with the programme's PEOs and PILOs, which are classified under four categories: knowledge and understanding; subject-specific skills; critical thinking skills; and general and transferrable skills. Although the UILOs are generally embedded in these graduate attributes and PILOs, the Panel notes that the internationalisation UILO is not. The Panel thus recommends that UCB should ensure embedding the internationalisation UILO into the programme graduate attributes and PILOs.

- An informal (desktop) benchmarking was conducted for the PILOs against those of similar programmes delivered at one local and one regional university, which resulted in a decrease in number of PILOs from 18 to six. Therefore, UCB is advised to conduct more benchmarking with similar local, regional and international programmes to further ensure that the PILOs are appropriate and meet the international norms.

- The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) does not provide sufficient evidence that the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are appropriate for the level of the courses and their contents. The evidence is limited to Course Specifications which show the proposed NQF

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   10

Level for each CILO. An example of an NQF mapping scorecard was also provided as evidence. The Course Specifications also show that the mapping between the CILOs and PILOs is done through the numbering of the CILOs in relation to the PILOs numbers. However, the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs was not provided for all courses (e.g., MGT559). The Panel thus recommends that UCB should ensure that the mapping of the CILOs to PILOs is conducted in all the courses.

- The SER mentions that the learning outcomes required for the research components of the MBA programme are only embedded in the 'Business Research Methods' (STS501) course. Therefore, UCB is advised to ensure that the research components are clearly reflected in most if not all courses' CILOs, since the MBA programme courses are supposed to be placed on NQF level 9, as indicated in the programme specification.

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

The curriculum is organised to provide academic progression of learning complexity guided by the NQF levels and credits, and it illustrates a balance between knowledge and skills, as well as theory and practice, and meets the norms and standards of the particular academic discipline.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The MBA study plan consists of 36 credit-hours, from which 15 credit-hours are core courses, 15 are emphasis courses, and six are for the Business Project or the Thesis. Adherence to UCB's Award of the Master's Degree Bylaws has ensured that the study plan is appropriately designed in terms of year-on-year and course-by-course progression and suitability of student workload. The Panel thus confirms its comparability to similar programmes in the region and internationally.

- The interviews and the supporting materials confirm that the MBA programme's study plan, and each concentration/emphasis therein, has gone through a number of benchmarking exercises against local and international higher education providers. The Panel noticed clear adherence to the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement (LTE) policy in the development of the programme. However, no evidence of reference to external professional bodies was found and it was also clear that the programme could benefit from stronger alignments with international standards. The Panel thus recommends that UCB should update the MBA curriculum to reflect professional body requirements, alignment with international benchmarks, and incorporation of input from a broader range of external stakeholders.

- The MBA study plan and the curriculum components are well-structured to ensure appropriate academic progression and balance between theory and practice and between knowledge and skills. This is demonstrated through a diverse set of core and emphasis

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 11

courses. With respect to the breadth requirement of the curriculum, the Panel examined all course specifications and noticed the inclusion of topics with depth and rigour deemed to be at a level of graduate studies.

- As to the textbooks and references, the Panel noticed a lack of current references, such as journal articles, in some courses (e.g., in 'Leadership and Change management' (MGT505). The Panel, thus, recommends that UCB should ensure that textbooks and references in the programme are current and up-to-date and that information and resources from current professional practice and latest research are being integrated in the courses.

- The SER, supporting materials, and extra evidence, explain or show how the ILOs of the research component (Thesis or Business project) are measured nor what criteria are being used for achieving their CILOs and associated PILOs.

- UCB has a research policy, a research strategy, Business Project/Thesis guide and guidelines for ethical research. These are well-disseminated to students and supervisors. During the interviews with students and supervisors, the Panel noticed a general awareness on their part of the ethical considerations, of which they are informed through organized workshops specifically for students and supervisors, which include training in the principles and ethics of scientific research.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The Panel reviewed a sample of course files and noted that the MBA programme includes a wide range of teaching methods, appropriate for the types and levels of the courses and in line with the university's LTE policy (2018-2022). The teaching methods include interactive lectures, class debates, presentations, and the use of guest lecturers. While the Panel acknowledges the variety of teaching and learning methods, the Panel notes that the e-learning process and the evaluation of its effectiveness are not mentioned in the LTE policy, although UCB adopted online learning during the global pandemic, as was confirmed during interviews with the faculty and students. The Panel, thus, recommends that UCB should develop and implement a clear and explicit e-learning policy and mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the hybrid teaching approach.

- The programme specification includes graduate attributes that encourage life-long learning and independently develop students' skills. The interviews indicated that there is a focus on participation in learning and exposure to professional practice/application through for example organized webinars. Also, the practical components of some of the

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *12*

courses include solving real-life problems, which helps strengthen the students' perceptions and research capabilities. Overall, the Panel found evidence on how the programme's learning environment promotes the concept of lifelong learning by, for instance, encouraging students to participate in some activities, such as the field visit to Bahrain Bourse, and the MBA research forum.

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

Suitable assessment arrangements, which include policies and procedures for assessing students' achievements, are in place and are known to all relevant stakeholders.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The Academic Planning Framework (2018-2024) is supported by the LTE Policy (2018-2022). Building upon this, the Department of Business Administration is following specific assessment strategy objectives, which aim to ensure that all assessments in the programme are aligned with the learning outcomes; are diverse and include both formative and summative assessment methods; include moderation of major assessments and examinations; are applied consistently and fairly; and involve the provision of prompt feedback. The LTE policy is disseminated to academic staff through the USB OneDrive, and to students through the MBA Student Handbook.

- The analysis of the relevant documentation by the Panel indicated that there are different types of assessments, both formative and summative, and with proper marking criteria. The Panel's examination of the course syllabi also clearly demonstrated this. In terms of feedback on student performance, the Panel examined samples of examination papers in the course files and found them adequate in terms of feedback with written comments.

- The SER indicates that academic integrity and honesty are upheld according to the University's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy, which aims at regulating the ethics in scientific research. The Policy clearly states that cases of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, forging works) are taken seriously by UCB. There are provisions, which are prescribed in the MBA Student Handbook, for addressing academic misconduct and student appeals. The Panel verified these provisions after examining an example of student's misconduct and grade appeal, and interviewing students, faculty and the Registrar.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *13*

Indicator 2.1: Admitted Students

There are clear admission requirements, which are appropriate for the level and type of the programme, ensuring equal opportunities for both genders, and the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources.

Judgement: *Not Addressed*

- UCB has an Admission Policy with unified admission requirements for the MBA programme. All admission requirements are published in the Student Handbook and on the UCB's website. The published admission requirements in the Admission Policy cover all details that candidates need, including admission requirements, process, and detailed information about all types of certificates. It was clear to the Panel during interviews with different stakeholders and from the samples of Admission Letters submitted as evidence that the admission criteria at UCB ensure equal opportunities for male and female applicants.

- According to the MBA Programme Specification, all applicants should provide proof of proficiency in English (IELTS with a score of 5.5 or more) to enrol in the first year and bypass the foundation programme. Applicants are exempted from proof of English proficiency if their first language is English, lived in a country in which English is a first language, graduated or are transferring from other recognised universities or secondary schools where English is the medium of instruction. As per the admission policy, any applicant whose Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is less than 2.5 out of 4.00 must pass an interview conducted by a Panel consisting of the MBA Director and two faculty members. Moreover, if applicants do not have a relevant and formal business or management degree background, they should provide evidence of a minimum of three years' work experience (or equivalent) in a managerial, professional or technical role. However, the Panel noticed that the admission criteria are not being consistently implemented in the MBA programme, as it was reported during interviews with the programme team and students that UCB uses interviews to evaluate applicants' English language proficiency instead of IELTS. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *14*

use only formal English language proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) to evaluate students' English language skills and preparedness for the programme.

- The Panel reviewed evidence on the benchmarking of the Bridging/Remedial Courses but came to find that there are no remedial courses for inadequately admitted students being delivered yet, which the Panel is not satisfied with. The Panel thus recommends that UCB should develop and implement appropriate remedial or bridging courses for the MBA student applicants who do not have an undergraduate business degree or business background.

- UCB specifies regulations and procedures for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning in the Admission Policy and Student Handbook. Based on what was reported in interviews, the Panel is satisfied with the articles related to these regulations and procedures, which are consistently implemented in the programme.

- UCB has a detailed Benchmarking Policy, which the Department of Business Administration relies on to benchmark the MBA programme. However, after examining the Benchmarking Reports of the programme, the Panel noticed that they include no proof of benchmarking the admission criteria of the MBA programme. The Panel also reviewed the minutes of meetings at the Department Council level and the IAB level and found that the criteria had not been discussed to ensure their consistency with national and international MBA programmes. Furthermore, the Panel was unable to find any evidence on how students' performance is analyzed in light of the admission criteria and the feedback from the external stakeholders, such as the IAB members or employers. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should conduct formal reviews of the MBA admission criteria, which are informed by student performance data, feedback from stakeholders, and outcomes of international benchmarking.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

There are clear procedures for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and professional development of academic staff, which ensure that staff members are fit-for-purpose and that help in staff retention.

Judgement: *Not Addressed*

- UCB has several policies and procedures for faculty members, which are published in the Human Resources (HR) Policies and Procedures, Faculty Guidebook, and Faculty Performance Appraisal Policy. The Academic procedures are supported by general definitions and regulations for recruitment, induction, responsibilities, professional development, appraisal, and promotion. The Panel reviewed evidence such as the Sample of Job Vacancy Advertisement, Sample of Interview Assessment Forms, Higher Education

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *15*

Council (HEC) Employment Approval, a Sample of Faculty Induction, a Sample of Appraisal Form and the Academic Promotion Committee's Report and confirmed during the interviews with faculty members that clear, transparent and implemented procedures for faculty recruitment, induction, appraisal and promotion are consistently implemented.

- UCB has included research as its third strategic objective, to strengthen and align research output with the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Strategy. The Faculty Guidebook asserts that faculty members should publish two peer-reviewed journal articles per academic year. The Panel also notes that there is a clear and detailed research policy to support the research aspect in UCB's Strategic Plan. Moreover, the Panel reviewed the department's Research Plan, Faculty Research Plans and Faculty Publications and concluded from them and from interviews that there are forms of policy implementation and procedures to support the quality and alignment of research by the faculty members with the UCB strategic goal.

- Despite having all the relevant HR procedures in place, there are insufficient full-time faculty members to teach on the programme, including senior-ranked faculty (associate professor/full professor). According to the SER, the Business Administration Department includes three full-time Assistant Professors and four part-time teaching staff. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should develop and implement a long-term recruitment plan to ensure a sufficient number of faculty members to deliver the programme, including senior-ranked faculty.

- Based on a review of the faculty workload and what was mentioned in interviews, the Panel concluded that the actual teaching load of faculty members is in some cases higher than the stipulated workload structure of UCB. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should align actual faculty workloads with the university's workload policy, to ensure a balance between teaching responsibilities, research, community engagement, academic advising, quality assurance and administrative responsibilities. Despite this, however, the Panel appreciates the dedication and commitment of the faculty members in fulfilling their roles, supporting students, and having a clear understanding of policies and procedures.

- The development and capacity building of faculty members is a strategic priority of the UCB's Strategic Plan. After reviewing the List of Professional Development Workshops and the Professional Development Forms, the Panel found that there are workshops related to thesis supervision, guidelines for thesis writing and MBA supervision.

- The Panel reviewed evidence on the Faculty Satisfaction Survey and found that the surveys are only for two years and the contents/questions of the two surveys are different with no official approvals on the survey results. Also, after reviewing the Faculty Exit Survey, the Panel found no evidence on using the survey results to enhance faculty retention. Moreover, the Panel did not find any evidence on faculty members' turnover/retention rates and how those rates are monitored to retain highly qualified

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *16*

faculty members. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should monitor staff turnover rates and follow consistent mechanisms to conduct and analyse faculty satisfaction surveys, so as to ensure the retention of highly qualified faculty members.

Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources

Physical and material resources are adequate in number, space, style and equipment; these include classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories and other study spaces; Information Technology facilities, library and learning resources.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB has three buildings with 21 classrooms, one computer laboratory, one network laboratory, and two graphic design laboratories. All classrooms and laboratories are equipped with data projectors, computers, whiteboards, and internet services. In addition, there are two auditoriums that can accommodate 80 students each, which are mainly used for hosting workshops and examinations. The Panel noted during the campus tour that there are no lifts for emergency cases or for stakeholders with special needs, with only a ramp at the gate for them. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should ensure that all stakeholders with mobility issues are able to access classrooms and other facilities on upper floors.

- UCB has an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Learning Resources Policy with appropriate procedures to ensure that ICT services are adequate for students' needs in the MBA programme. The ICT facilities available for the students, based on the Physical and Material Resources, include 60 Personal Computers (PCs) in laboratories. All PCs are connected *via* the UCB network facilities and Wi-Fi is available across the campus. The Panel is of view that the ICT facilities are appropriate.

- The library is situated on the ground floor with the intent to cater for the needs of students with special needs; the library is also equipped with more than 7000 books, electronic subscription ProQuest, 12 desktop computers and a silent area for students to read and conduct research. The Panel noted from the Library Benchmark and the List of Business References that the number of textbooks for the MBA programme is 2,571 with only one electronic subscription.

- The Panel learned during interviews with UCB administrative staff that all facilities' maintenance is outsourced and the overall responsibility of managing facilities lies with the Head of HR and Administration. The Panel could not find a Policy for Maintenance of the Resources nor procedures related to facilities maintenance processes nor evidence of monitoring the ad-hoc maintenance requests to ensure timely completion of requests.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *17*

Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should implement formal mechanisms to ensure that maintenance of its facilities is undertaken systematically.

- UCB has an Occupational Health and Safety (H&S) Policy and conducts H&S training for staff and students. A first aid room is available and appropriately equipped. During interviews, the Panel was informed that there are five staff members trained in first aid, but no dedicated nurse or first aid responder available on campus at all times. The Panel finds the lack of availability of a full-time health professional on campus concerning. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should make appropriate arrangements to ensure that stakeholders have accesses to timely first aid on campus in case of a medical emergency.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

There are functioning management information and tracking systems that support the decision-making processes and evaluate the utilisation of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, along with policies and procedures that ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The Student Information System (LOGSIS) is the institutional management information system and is accessible through UCB's Portal. It is used to manage admissions and registration, schedule classes and examinations, maintain records of grades, track attendance and academic advising, generate reports and audit graduation requirements, amongst other functions, some of which were demonstrated to the Panel during the virtual visit. Training sessions for staff and students on LOGSIS features are conducted. Although the effectiveness of the system is not formally evaluated (see Indicator 4.4), the Panel heard positive views about LOGSIS in interviews with faculty and students and noted that data reports generated through the system were discussed in committee and departmental meetings. The demonstration of the system further confirmed that it provides a robust tool to support managing and decision-making in the MBA programme.

- UCB uses Microsoft Teams as a virtual learning platform to support learning and teaching activities, even though it is not intended to be used as a Learning Management System (LMS). Feedback from faculty surveys supports the Panel's view, with staff recommending the adoption of a conventional LMS as being more effective and efficient for both faculty and students in a hybrid learning environment. This was also confirmed during the Panel interviews with faculty members and students. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should deploy a more suitable virtual learning platform to deliver academic programmes, which includes features that support and enhance learning in a blended learning environment.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 *18*

- The utilization of resources has not been systematically tracked and monitored until recently, and more efforts need to be made in this area to evaluate if the library and e-resources are being used effectively. There is also limited evidence of utilization data being discussed in committee meetings or being used to inform decision making. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should undertake systematic and formal monitoring of the utilisation of e-resources and implement action plans to enhance the utilisation rates where required.

- UCB has a policy for Security of Learner Records and Certificates Issuance that includes information on the safekeeping of physical records of students' documents and marks. The policy shows all processes and procedures needed to handle students' academic issues. Access to the LOGSIS is password controlled and restricted by the Admission and Registration Unit, which is responsible for releasing students' grades and making changes based on the outcome of grade appeals, as confirmed in interviews. The ICT Operational Plan and ICT Learning Resources Policy include actions related to disaster recovery and system and data backups, which further assures the security of records through an ICT Maintenance Agreement with the external vendor that developed the system.

- The procedures for calculating students' CGPA and the confirmation of the programme's certifications and transcripts are defined in the Security of Learner Records and Certificates Issuance Policy. The Panel reviewed the Programme's Certificate and the Transcript and found that both are accurate in describing the achieved learning by the students. The Panel also learned during interviews with alumni that certificates and transcripts are issued in a timely manner.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

There is appropriate student support available in terms of guidance, and care for students including students with special needs, newly admitted and transferred students, and students at risk of academic failure.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- UCB provides students with different types of support during their study in the programme. The academic support and guidance provided to students are well explained in the Student Support Policy. The Student Support Policy outlines the support services available to assist all students to adapt successfully to UCB life. The policy also describes the procedures for assisting students who have personal, medical, psychological, or financial difficulties that may adversely affect their academic progress and achievements. The Student Handbook also shows UCB's rules, regulations, students' rights and duties in addition to student support services related to orientation, ICT support, library, MS Teams, and extracurricular activities. The Panel concluded from the evidence provided on

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 19

Extra-Curricular Activities, Orientation Activities, Survey Reports on Extra-curricular Activities and from the interviews that the student support provided by the programme is appropriate.

- Career guidance is provided by the Student Affairs and Alumni Unit, which organises regular Career Fairs and Workshops on how to prepare and enhance students' resumes to compete in the job market and achieve their career objectives. The Panel also learned during interviews that students are aware and happy with the career guidance support that they receive. While the Panel finds the career support provision appropriate and acknowledges that the Alumni Survey has a brief question about career support, the Panel is still of the view that such support needs to be formally evaluated by current students at the programme-level (see Indicator 4.4).

- All newly admitted students receive the Student Handbook during their orientation, which covers UCB's offered programmes and other academic issues to help students during their study. The Panel reviewed documents related to the student orientation and discussed its details with the students during interviews, based on which the Panel concluded that the induction arrangements for newly and transferred students are sufficient and appropriate.

- Academic advising processes are defined in the MBA By-Laws, while faculty are given information about their advising responsibilities, which form part of their workload, in the Faculty Guidebook and through training workshops. Students meet with their assigned advisor every semester and records of meetings are maintained in LOGSIS. Low performing students are encouraged to enhance their academic performance by their academic advisors. The Panel noted that UCB classifies students at risk into two categories: students with low risk and those with high risk, based on CGPA. The Panel examined the academic advisors' reports on students' and learned from interviews with the MBA students that academic advising has supported them in assessing and monitoring their progress. Thus, the Panel appreciates the timely support provided to at-risk students through academic advising, additional tutorials and other interventions. UCB also has a Policy for Enabling Learners with Special Needs and is also committed to accepting and dealing with students of both genders with no discrimination between male and female. As a result, the Panel concludes that UCB ensures equal opportunities among students and supports special needs students throughout their period of study, although improvements need to be made in supporting students with low mobility (see Recommendation in Indicator 2.3).

- The Student Affairs and Alumni Unit runs a diverse range of programmes and services aimed at enhancing the learning experience of students, including seminars, counseling events, career days, and conferences. The results of the Alumni Survey in 2021-2022 indicate that the majority of the respondents are already employed (70% of them) and are

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *20*

satisfied with their education and learning experiences at UCB. Nevertheless, students reported in interviews that there were limited opportunities for social and recreational events due to a lack of facilities on campus. This was also observed by the Panel during the campus tour. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should provide students with appropriate social and recreational facilities, which are evaluated for effectiveness.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *21*

Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

The students and graduates of the programme meet academic standards that are compatible with equivalent programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.

Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

The assessment is effective and aligned with learning outcomes, to ensure attainment of the graduate attributes and academic standards of the programme.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB claims that the quality of the MBA programme is assured through 'consistent assessment policies and procedures', as well as a 'robust assessment patter' and internal and external moderation. The Assessment and Moderation Policy, which was reviewed in January 2022, details the processes to be followed to ensure assessment methods are valid and reliable. The Course Specifications contain information about the assessments used in a course (Section 12), as well as a mapping of the assessments to CILOs (Section 15) to evaluate student achievement. The Panel examined all the MBA Course Specifications and found a number of inconsistencies, discrepancies and errors in the mapping of assessments to CILOs which affect the reliability of the assessments. For example, the information presented in Section 12 of the course specification does not always correspond to the mapping in Section 15. In many courses (especially the Finance and Marketing courses), every assessment is mapped to all the CILOs which is not realistic or feasible. In some courses (e.g., ACC501, MGT507, MIS510), the Final Examination is mapped to a CILO related to teamwork. In other courses (e.g., MGT506), topics which are not listed in Section 12 are being assessed. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should carefully review and update the mapping of assessments to CILOs in each MBA Course Specifications document, to ensure that it is appropriate and valid.

- Samples of students' assessments were provided in the Course Files from which the Panel identified several areas of improvement in the approaches used to evaluate students' achievement of the CILOs, particularly in relation to the coursework component which carries a weight of 40% but is not moderated. For example, only some of the coursework assessments had marking rubrics which consisted of a breakdown of the total marks, but no descriptors of achievement. Even if a marking rubric was defined, it was not applied in the evaluation of the assessment. Also, very few of the assessment samples seen by the Panel had feedback for the students on them. Additionally, the interviews confirmed that student participation is assessed subjectively by the instructor, in the absence of an

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 22

appropriate marking rubric to ensure fairness. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should ensure that marking rubrics and descriptors are used consistently to evaluate coursework assessments and provide students with feedback in all MBA courses.

- The End of Course Report includes a section for analysing the achievement of CILOs based on the assessments. A separate CILO achievement spreadsheet is also generated and included in the Course File. However, the mapping of the assessments to CILOs in the achievement spreadsheet does not always match the mapping in the Course Specification, and in some courses, it includes achievement data for CILOs which are not mapped to the assessment in the Specification. This issue had not been detected in the pre-assessment moderation reports. This demonstrates that the mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of assessment processes are not functioning effectively and the data presented in the End of Course Reports is not always valid and reliable. The Panel has already noted that the CILOs are not mapped to PILOs (see Recommendation in Indicator 1.2) and as such, the Panel concludes that the academic standards in the MBA programme are not consistently met. The Panel thus recommends that UCB should develop and implement mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of its assessment processes and make improvements to assessment practices to ensure they are consistently and robustly deployed.

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is ensured through the consistent implementation of relevant policies and procedures that deter plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (e.g., cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work).

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB has an Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy covering all aspects of academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating, as well as disciplinary procedures. Elements of the policy have been replicated in the MBA Student Handbook, and the Panel found through interviews that students and staff were generally aware of the policy. Students are educated about how to avoid academic misconduct during their orientation and through information presented in Course Specifications. UCB subscribes to Turnitin which students must use to submit their coursework. A maximum similarity index threshold of 20% has been set for all coursework submissions and students can re-submit their work up to three times to ensure that the threshold is not exceeded. The penalties for plagiarism are defined in the Policy and consistent with HEC regulations. The Panel requested samples of plagiarism cases to verify how the Policy is implemented, however, since multiple submissions are allowed to reduce the similarity index below the threshold, no plagiarism violations have been reported, as was also confirmed in interviews. The Panel does not consider this approach to be pedagogically sound because it does not

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   23

promote awareness of what constitutes plagiarism and only focuses students on an arbitrary threshold that represents a similarity percentage. Submissions which are below the 20% threshold may still contain plagiarised text copied from unacknowledged sources. Therefore, the Panel strongly recommends that UCB should review the effectiveness of the institutional processes for deterring, detecting, penalizing, and monitoring plagiarism and develop a holistic approach which fosters a culture of academic integrity.

- There are appropriate processes in place for detecting academic misconduct in final examinations, and records of these cases are maintained by the Examination and Scheduling Committee. However, it was reported in interviews that misconduct in mid-term examinations is dealt with by the instructor, which may result in inconsistencies in the penalties applied by different instructors. Hence, the Panel urges UCB to standardise the management of misconduct in mid-term examinations.

- UCB has defined Guidelines for Ethical Research which specify the requirements related to research ethics. Brief references to ethics are also made in the Business Project/Thesis Guide which is given to students when they commence their thesis (see Indicator 3.5). Students describe the ethical implications of their research in the thesis proposal and all projects require HEC approval in addition to approval from external research committees in some cases. However, there is no evidence of ethics approval being given internally to ensure that matters related to privacy, confidentiality and voluntary participation are addressed. Questionnaires developed by students to collect primary data do not provide any information to participants about these ethical considerations. Furthermore, the Panel found through interviews a lack of understanding amongst students and staff about research ethics issues, which in most cases tend to be confused with plagiarism. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should implement mechanisms to effectively address research ethics and ethical considerations and ensure these are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The Assessment and Moderation Policy details the internal and external moderation processes followed at UCB. A suite of moderation forms for pre and post internal and external moderation have been developed and the entire process has been benchmarked with a local university. The Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee (LTARC) Chair oversees the moderation arrangements and appoints the moderators. Due to the small size of the Department, there are insufficient faculty members to ensure

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 24

appropriate moderation across all the different specialisations in the programme (see also Indicator 2.2).

- Both the mid-term and final examinations are pre-moderated internally and externally to ensure that they are fit for purpose and consistent with the CILOs. Samples of internal pre-moderation forms were provided, which consisted mainly of ticks, with no comments or feedback provided. A total of 25% of courses in a semester are selected for external pre-moderation in line with the External Moderators Policy; however, the Panel could not verify, based on the Course Files provided for 2021/22, that this is being complied with. Only the MIS courses had feedback from the external pre-moderator. General, rather than course-specific, reports by external moderators were available for the Business courses.

- The MBA Programme Coordinator prepares a report based on the feedback from internal and external pre-moderators and follows up on any comments made to ensure they are implemented. Coursework assessments are not moderated but verified by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) during the course file audit. Since these assessments contribute towards 40% of the assessment schedule and are mapped to several CILOs in most courses, it is important to ensure that they are also fit for purpose. As noted above (see Indicator 3.1), the Panel is concerned with the mapping of the coursework assessments to CILOs and recommends that UCB should apply moderation processes to coursework assessments to ensure they are valid and aligned with CILOs.

- Post-moderation of mid-term and final examinations is undertaken internally to determine if the marking criteria were applied fairly. Samples of student work (high, average, and low), depending on the number of enrolments in a course, are moderated after they are marked. External post-moderation of assessments is not undertaken and is not mentioned in the Assessment and Moderation Policy. However, the Panel learned that it was conducted before the pandemic when a decision was made to suspend it due to logistical difficulties. The Panel recommends that UCB should implement external post-moderation of assessments to verify student achievement of PILOs and ensure academic standards are being met in the programme (see also Indicator 3.1).

- The effectiveness of the moderation arrangements is verified by following up on the moderators' feedback through Annual Programme Monitoring Reports and during the course file audit by the QAAC. Issues raised by moderators are also discussed and reviewed in departmental meetings. However, with the issues with moderation identified above, better monitoring of effectiveness of moderation is highly advised.

Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022　　　　　　　　　　　　　*25*

Where assessed work-based learning takes place, there is a policy and procedures to manage the process and its assessment, to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level for meeting the intended learning outcomes.

Not applicable

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

Where there is a capstone project or thesis/dissertation component, there are clear policies and procedures for supervision and evaluation which state the responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and students, and there is a mechanism to monitor the related implementations and improvements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- All MBA students must complete a six-credit capstone thesis (MGT599) or a business project (MGT520) to graduate. UCB states that the capstone component is critical to the achievement of 'research-analytical, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills' which are an integral part of the PILOs. The Panel requested the MBA course files, including the CILO to PILO mapping for the last three years; however, the course files for MGT599 and MGT520 were not provided. The Course File Audit Report also does not include these two courses, indicating that they have not been audited. The Panel was informed through interviews about the contribution of the capstone thesis/project to the PILOs in general terms, however no documented evidence was available to show the link between the CILOs of the two capstone courses and the MBA PILOs (see Recommendation in Indicator 1.2).

- The UCB Thesis Guide provides comprehensive guidelines to students on the steps to complete their thesis/project. The roles and responsibilities of the supervisors and students are detailed in the Guide, and workshops are organised for supervisors and students about the thesis/project arrangements and research in general. Students' progress is regularly monitored by their supervisor and the Head of Department and documented in Progress Reports. During interviews, students stated that they were generally satisfied with the support they received from their supervisor, however, satisfaction with the supervision process is not formally monitored. The Panel, therefore, recommends that UCB should implement appropriate mechanisms to systematically evaluate students' satisfaction with thesis/project supervision arrangements. At the same time, the Panel cautions that UCB must ensure that there are sufficient faculty members available to supervise the large cohort of MBA students currently enrolled, which are consistent with HEC regulations (see Recommendation in Indicator 2.2); particularly since students reported in interviews that some of them have waited up to a year for a supervisor to become available, causing delays to graduate.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *26*

- The assessment mechanisms for the thesis/project are clearly defined in the Course Specifications and the MBA Bylaws and they involve internal examiners for the business project in the MBA Research Forum and an additional external examiner for the thesis in the *viva voce*. Sample theses/projects and evaluations by internal and external examiners were provided and demonstrated that the assessment mechanisms were applied consistently and rigorously. Students reported that they were also encouraged to publish their research. The Panel acknowledges the robust assessment approach for the MBA thesis/project through the Research Fora and *viva voce*, and the encouragement given to students to develop their research through publications.

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

The achievements of the graduates are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes as expressed in their assessed work, rates of progression and first destinations.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The students' level of achievement in individual courses is measured though the assessments which are mapped to CILOs and is reported in the End of Course Reports as well as in the CILO achievement spreadsheet at the end of each semester. However, as discussed previously (see Recommendation in Indicator 3.1), the mapping of assessments to CILOs is not always accurate or consistent. The mapping of CILOs to PILOs has also not been completed for all the MBA courses (see Recommendation in Indicator 1.2), and therefore the students' achievement of learning outcomes is not robustly evaluated. The Panel thus urges UCB to take the necessary steps to ensure that the mapping of assessments to CILOs, and CILOs to PILOs is fully accurate and complete as a matter of urgency and priority, so that the achievements of graduates can be verified. Nevertheless, some aspects of student achievement can be discerned from End of Course Reports, PILO Attainment Reports and Annual Programme Monitoring Reports; however, the former are course-level reports, while the latter two are related only to the PILOs of the courses offered in a specific semester or academic year. UCB's alumni and employer surveys do not differentiate between undergraduate and postgraduate alumni and, as such, they are of limited value in evaluating student achievement. Graduate destination surveys do not collect data about graduate learning outcomes.

- UCB maintains MBA cohort and retention data, although these are recently implemented initiatives. The ratios of admitted students to successful graduates were provided but are not maintained by cohort, while aggregated completion data is not available or benchmarked. Since the MBA programme has enrolled more than 100 students each year for the past two academic years, tracking graduates and completion rates by cohort is critical to ensure students complete the programme on time and achieve all the PILOs. None of the data collected is reported in the Annual Programme Monitoring Reports.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *27*

Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should systematically monitor and report the completion rates and ratios of admitted students to successful graduates in the MBA programme.

- Employer satisfaction with MBA graduates is not monitored at the programme level through the Employer Survey and there was no evidence of employer feedback about graduates in the IAB meeting minutes. Although employers were mostly positive about the MBA graduates, feedback still needs to be formally collected to assure student achievement of learning outcomes and academic standards and make programme improvements. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should systematically monitor employer satisfaction with MBA graduates and use the feedback collected to inform programme reviews.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *28*

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

</div>

Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

There is a clear quality assurance management system, in relation to the programme that ensures the institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB's Quality Manual describes the Quality Management System (QMS) with all the related policies and procedures that help ensure quality in the development, approval, implementation, and review of all academic matters. Academic and administrative policies, procedures and guidelines, related forms and templates are also available to staff electronically through the QMS One Drive. The Panel noted from UCB's Committees Terms of Reference that policies, regulations, and procedures are subject to regular review and update by the Policy Steering Committee. The Quality Manual shows that most of UCB's policies and procedures were revised and updated in 2018.

- UCB has clear Roles and Responsibilities for the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO). According to the SER, the Department Council, the QAAO and the QAAC carry out UCB's quality assurance management processes. The Academic Department Council is responsible for managing the department academic affairs and implementing the quality assurance policies and procedures for all educational programmes within the Department. The QAAC monitor, advise, and provide assurance to the academic departments on the quality of the educational programmes as well as ensure the implementation of quality procedures across all educational programmes of UCB. The Panel also noted during interviews with staff that their roles and responsibilities in the programme's quality assurance is well communicated and clearly understood and that the quality assurance-related workshops and training are informative and effective.

- The Panel acknowledges that UCB has the appropriate policies and regulations that serve the needs of the MBA programme, and which are communicated to stakeholders. However, after reviewing the implementations of these policies and procedures including the Assessment and Moderation Policy, External Moderators Policy, Benchmarking Policy and Review, Evaluation, and Improvement Policy and discovering gaps in them, as noted

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *29*

throughout this report, the Panel recommends that UCB should effectively apply all policies related to the programme in a consistent manner.

- The Panel learned during interviews that the quality assurance management system is monitored, evaluated, and improved by the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee and the QAAC. After reviewing a sample of Quality Assurance Related Reports and Reports Related to Programme Review and Development, the Panel could not identify in them any evidence on continuous evaluation of the quality assurance management system at the programme level nor follow-up on the areas that need improvement. Also, the QAAO went through a number of changes in recent years and a new Head was appointed in the Fall semester of 2022. The Panel noted a lack of human resources dedicated to the QA function considering the QAAO's remit. In response to the Panel's question about how the implementation of recommendations arising from AMRs or surveys is followed up, staff indicated that UCB is a small institution which makes it possible to stay informed. The Panel accepts that UCB's size facilitates more efficient communication, however, the QMS is complex and requires more robust and formal oversight to verify that it is being fully implemented and improved over time. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should implement rigorous monitoring of the quality assurance management system to ensure effective and consistent deployment and follow up of recommendations, improvements, and action plans.

- **Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership**

  The programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership and there are clear lines of accountability.

  Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The organisational chart of UCB indicates the appropriate flowlines of reporting within all the institution's levels, as indicated in the Quality Manual. The Panel noted that the Department is responsible for managing the MBA programme through following the Bylaws listed in the Award of the Master's Degree. At the department level, the management of the programme is represented by the Head of Department and the MBA Programme Coordinator, with clear roles and responsibilities according to their Job Descriptions. Nevertheless, and based on the several areas of improvement identified by the Panel in this report, the Panel finds that, in practice, the programme management is not quite appropriately implemented in terms of demonstrating effective leadership.

- As mentioned in the UCB's Committees Terms of Reference, UCB has clear reporting lines, starting with the department's different committees up to the Department Council which reports to the University Council, which was confirmed to the Panel through interviews. Additionally, several examples were found within the submitted evidence that

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 30

demonstrate the effective lines of communication and decision-making between the different entities serving the programme.

- Terms of Reference for all administrative posts and committees are clearly outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual. The Committees' Terms of Reference and Faculty Guidebook also detail the responsibilities for the various levels of the university's academic structure, from the Board of Trustees to the faculty members. Adherence to the Terms of Reference is evident in the Formation of Committees in the Business Department; however, the Panel recommends that UCB should update the Terms of reference for all its committees to reflect their new remit and composition. The Panel noted that the Vice President (Academic Affairs) assumed the QAAC chair role in March 2022. It is common and good practice for the QA head to hold the chair of the QA committee and the Panel advises UCB to consider aligning its QAAC leadership with this common practice.

- The programme management takes place at the operational level through the MBA Programme Coordinator and the Head of Department. The programme is managed at the strategic level through the Board of Trustees, President, Vice President (Academic Affairs), University College Council, Scientific Research Council as well as other committees.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

There are arrangements for annual internal evaluation and periodic reviews of the programme that incorporate both internal and external feedback and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB has an Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy, which provides a framework for annual quality assurance monitoring and periodic review of the MBA programme. The programme annual monitoring and review report template includes student performance data; issues related to the curriculum; CILOs; teaching and learning methods; assessments and resources; feedback from external stakeholders; and issues raised by students in surveys.

- The Panel reviewed evidence on the Annual Improvement Plan and the Implementation of Annual Programme Recommendations and found insufficient evidence on the monitoring of the implementation of the recommendations. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should ensure consistent implementation of the annual programme review based on institutional policies, and the alignment of the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022　　　　　　　　　　　　　*31*

- The Policy for Periodic Review includes the procedures for programme review, which outline the steps to be followed in the preparation of the periodic reviews' reports by the programme. The policy provides important input for External Reviews, including periodic programme reviews and BQA APRs and Institutional Review.

- The last periodic review of the MBA was in 2019 and upon examination of its report, the Panel found limited evidence on including feedback from internal and external stakeholders such as students, alumni, external examiners in the review. The Panel also found insufficient evidence on the monitoring of the implementation of the periodic review recommendations. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should ensure involvement of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, and the utilisation of a variety of institutional and programme data and reference points, in its programme reviews, and should align the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

Benchmarking studies and the structured comments collected from stakeholders' surveys are analysed and the outcomes are used to inform decisions on programmes and are made available to the stakeholders.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- In compliance with UCB's Benchmarking Policy, the Business Department conducted a benchmarking exercise to ensure that the MBA programme (Islamic Finance and Management Concentrations) is in line with national and international standards. The PILOs of the MBA programme were benchmarked with one local and one regional university. The benchmarking resulted in reducing the number of the PILOs. The study plan of the Islamic Finance Concentration of the MBA programme was benchmarked with two international universities. This resulted in modifying the study plan of both the thesis and business project tracks. Whereas the study plan of the Management Concentration of the MBA programme was benchmarked with three other universities, of which one is local, one regional, and one international. This resulted in modifying the study plan of both the thesis and business project tracks. However, the Panel noticed that the MBA programme was not benchmarked against any professional qualifications and, thus, urges UCB to address the recommendation under Indicator 1.3.

- At UCB, the QAAO is responsible for the administration and analysis of all stakeholders' surveys, which include the student course valuation survey, alumni survey, staff satisfaction survey and employers' survey. After examining a sample of surveys and survey reports, the Panel noted several weaknesses in the scope, design, analysis and use of these instruments. For example, a summary report of all the Course Evaluation Surveys

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *32*

at UCB is produced and a distinction is only made between undergraduate and postgraduate results, but not individual programmes. Also, in almost all the surveys, the response rates are low and the data collected is not being used to inform decision making at the programme level, with only some general recommendations resulting from the survey analyses and without actions for implementation and monitoring. Thus, the Panel recommends that UCB should expand the range of surveys used to collect data from stakeholders, deploy surveys regularly and systematically, increase response rates to enhance data validity and reliability, use survey results to make improvements and inform decision-making, and communicate changes made to stakeholders.

Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs

The programme has a functioning advisory board and there is continuous scoping of the labour market and the national and societal needs, where appropriate for the programme type, to ensure the relevancy and currency of the programme.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The MBA programme has an IAB which functions in accordance with its prescribed terms of reference and UCB's Expectations Matrix. The Board consists of industry representatives and alumni and meets annually. Meeting minutes are recorded and indicate that the IAB discharges its responsibilities in line with its remit.

- Feedback is sought from the IAB and used to inform changes to the MBA programme. In the last IAB Meeting in June 2022, the members reviewed the PILOs, programme structure, and graduate attributes. Also, there is evidence that actions included in the Annual Improvement Plan that consider the incorporation of data analysis skills, programme management and data visualisation skills within the MBA curriculum, were based on IAB recommendations. The Panel appreciates the advice and expertise of the IAB members, which are being used to improve the programme.

- A Market Needs Analysis was conducted in 2022 for the MBA programme. The main purpose of the study was to gain a clear understanding of the labour market requirements and job-related skills that employers are seeking. The results of this Market Needs Analysis indicated that employers focus on incorporating skills related to 'career and self-development, communication and leadership'. However, the analysis did not reflect the preparedness of the MBA graduate to join the national workforce. The response rate was also low, with only 13 out of the 25 companies contacted to participate taking part. Furthermore, the study was not administered only to students from the MBA programme, but also included data for those from the BScBA programme. This impacts on the usefulness of the data collected since the skills identified by employers cannot be differentiated between undergraduate and postgraduate students. The Panel recommends

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 33

that UCB should conduct a more comprehensive and programme-focused market study which is effectively used to inform the MBA programme, its curriculum reviews, and improvements. In addition, after reviewing the relevant evidence, the Panel could not find any indication of how the feedback and suggestions received from the market needs analysis report and alumni survey are discussed, implemented, and monitored by the department's committees. The Panel thus recommends that UCB should implement rigorous monitoring and reviewing of the applied mechanisms of the market needs study of the programme.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *34*

V. Conclusion

> **Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the virtual site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020*:**
>
> **There is No Confidence in the Master of Business Administration of College of Business Administration offered by the University college of Bahrain.**

In coming to its conclusion regarding the four Standards, the Panel notes, with appreciation, the following:

1. The dedication and commitment of the faculty members in fulfilling their roles, supporting students, and having a clear understanding of policies and procedures.

2. The timely support provided to at-risk students through academic advising, additional tutorials and other interventions.

3. The advice and expertise of the IAB members, which are being used to improve the programme.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the University College of Bahrain should:

1. Develop and implement a clear programme planning framework involving a broad range of stakeholders (e.g., alumni, external reviewers), to ensure that the MBA programme remains relevant and fit for purpose.

2. Update the MBA Risk Register to include actual and current programme risks, and urgently deploy effective mitigation strategies to address the insufficiency of full-time faculty on the programme.

3. Ensure embedding the internationalisation university intended learning outcomes into the programme graduate attributes and programme intended learning outcomes.

4. Ensure that the mapping of the course intended learning outcomes to programme intended learning outcomes is conducted in all the courses.

5. Update the MBA curriculum to reflect professional body requirements, alignment with international benchmarks, and incorporation of input from a broader range of external stakeholders.

6. Ensure that textbooks and references in the programme are current and up-to-date and that information and resources from current professional practice and latest research are being integrated in the courses.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *35*

7. Develop a formal mechanism to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being covered in the research-based courses and that their achievement is being assessed.

8. Develop and implement a clear and explicit e-learning policy and mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the hybrid teaching approach.

9. Use only formal English language proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) to evaluate students' English language skills and preparedness for the programme.

10. Develop and implement appropriate remedial or bridging courses for the MBA student applicants who do not have an undergraduate business degree or business background.

11. Conduct formal reviews of the MBA admission criteria, which are informed by student performance data, feedback from stakeholders, and outcomes of international benchmarking.

12. Develop and implement a long-term recruitment plan to ensure a sufficient number of faculty members to deliver the programme, including senior-ranked faculty.

13. Align actual faculty workloads with the university's workload policy, to ensure a balance between teaching responsibilities, research, community engagement, academic advising, quality assurance and administrative responsibilities.

14. Monitor staff turnover rates and follow consistent mechanisms to conduct and analyse faculty satisfaction surveys, so as to ensure the retention of highly qualified faculty members.

15. Ensure that all stakeholders with mobility issues are able to access classrooms and other facilities on upper floors.

16. Implement formal mechanisms to ensure that maintenance of its facilities is undertaken systematically.

17. Make appropriate arrangements to ensure that stakeholders have accesses to timely first aid on campus in case of a medical emergency.

18. Deploy a more suitable virtual learning platform to deliver academic programmes, which includes features that support and enhance learning in a blended learning environment.

19. Undertake systematic and formal monitoring of the utilisation of e-resources and implement action plans to enhance the utilisation rates where required.

20. Provide students with appropriate social and recreational facilities, which are evaluated for effectiveness.

21. Carefully review and update the mapping of assessments to course intended learning outcomes in each MBA Course Specifications document, to ensure that it is appropriate and valid.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   *36*

22. Ensure that marking rubrics and descriptors are used consistently to evaluate coursework assessments and provide students with feedback in all MBA courses.

23. Evaluate the effectiveness of its assessment processes and make improvements to assessment practices to ensure they are consistently and robustly deployed

24. Review the effectiveness of the institutional processes for deterring, detecting, penalizing, and monitoring plagiarism and develop a holistic approach which fosters a culture of academic integrity.

25. Implement mechanisms to effectively address research ethics and ethical considerations and ensure these are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

26. Apply moderation processes to coursework assessments to ensure they are valid and aligned with course intended learning outcomes.

27. Implement external post-moderation of assessments to verify student achievement of programme intended learning outcomes and ensure academic standards are being met in the programme

28. Implement appropriate mechanisms to systematically evaluate students' satisfaction with thesis/project supervision arrangements.

29. Systematically monitor and report the completion rates and ratios of admitted students to successful graduates in the MBA programme.

30. Systematically monitor employer satisfaction with MBA graduates and use the feedback collected to inform programme reviews.

31. Effectively apply all policies related to the programme in a consistent manner.

32. Implement rigorous monitoring of the quality assurance management system to ensure effective and consistent deployment and follow up of recommendations, improvements, and action plans.

33. Update the Terms of reference for all its committees to reflect their new remit and composition.

34. Ensure consistent implementation of the annual programme review based on institutional policies, and the alignment of the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

35. Ensure involvement of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, and the utilisation of a variety of institutional and programme data and reference points, in the programme reviews, and align the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

36. Expand the range of surveys used to collect data from stakeholders, deploy surveys regularly and systematically, increase response rates to enhance data validity and

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022   37

reliability, use survey results to make improvements and inform decision-making, and communicate changes made to stakeholders.

37. Conduct a more comprehensive and programme-focused market study that is effectively used to inform the MBA programme, its curriculum reviews and improvements

38. Implement rigorous monitoring and reviewing of the applied mechanisms of the market needs study of the programme.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University college of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration– Master of Business Administration – 12 – 14 December 2022 38