Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor in Graphic Design

College of Arts and Science

Applied Science University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 9-11 May 2016

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Acronyms

ASU	Applied Science University
BGD	Bachelor in Graphic Design
BID	Bachelor in Interior Design
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HoD	Head of Department
MIS	Management Information Systems
NASAD	National Association of Schools of Art and Design
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QA	Quality Assurance
QAU	Quality Assurance Unit
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
SER	Self Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews, which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the BQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), 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 *four* indicators that are used to measure whether or not a programme meets international standards are as follows:

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

Indicator 3: **Academic Standards of the Graduates**

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

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

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as '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, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a 'limited confidence 'judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be 'no confidence', as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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	

B.   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Applied Science University

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Arts and Science of Applied Science University was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 9-11 May 2016 for the academic programmes offered by the College, these are: Bachelor in Computer Science; Bachelor in Graphic Design; and Bachelor in Interior Design.

This Report provides an account of the review process conducted by the DHR and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor in Graphic Design based on the analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit, analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers) and the analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

Applied Science University was notified by the DHR/BQA on 22 June 2015 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of its College of Arts and Science with the site visit taking place in May 2016. In preparation for the review, Applied Science University conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 4 February 2016.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Graphic Design and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised three external reviewers.

This Report provides the findings of the Panel based on

(i) the analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit;

(ii) the analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers); and

(iii) the analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that Applied Science University will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its Bachelor in Graphic Design. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of Applied Science University to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, Applied Science University is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to Applied Science University for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty and administrative staff of the Bachelor in Graphic Design.

C.   Overview of the College of Arts and Science

The College of Arts and Science is one of the three colleges of Applied Science University (ASU), which was established in 2004 and currently the University offers nine undergraduate and five postgraduate programmes on a range of disciplines. The study in the College of Arts and Science started in 2005 and the College consists of three departments, namely: the Department of Design and Arts, the Department of Computer Science and the Department of General Studies. The College offers three bachelor degrees in Computer Science, Graphic Design and Interior Design. The Department of Design and Arts offers two academic programmes in Interior Design and Graphic Design. The vision of the College of Arts and Science is to achieve a distinguished position in producing, disseminating, and applying knowledge, to contribute to the development of individuals, as well as the economy of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Gulf region. The mission of the College includes the provision of distinguished educational programmes in the fields of information technology and applied arts, which meet the needs of local and regional labour market. This is by

preparing students and providing them with the capabilities that enable them to succeed in their career, pursue their graduate studies, and get involved in research in their fields of specialisation. The statistics provided by the College during the site visit indicate that there were 167 students registered in the three programmes in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016 with 17 faculty members working on full-time basis.

D.   Overview of the Bachelor in Graphic Design Programme

The Bachelor in Graphic Design (BGD) was first offered by the Department of Design and Arts in the academic year 2005-2006. The programme is offered in Arabic to attract students from Bahrain and the region, where Arabic is main means of interaction and communication, beside English, which is the language of instruction in some computer-based courses of Graphic Design. The first cohort of the programme, which included 12 students, graduated in the academic year 2008-2009. The total number of graduates in the programme since its inception till now is 66 students. Currently, there are 79 students registered in the programme, according to the statistics offered by the institution during the site visit. The BGD programme is offered by four faculty members working on full-time basis.

E.   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor in Interior Design Programme

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	**Limited Confidence**

1.   Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

1.1   The BGD programme has a clear academic planning framework that delineates the linkage between the vision and mission of the University and College. ASU vision focuses on 'becoming one of the leading universities that support applied education and scientific research in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Gulf region.' Also, the University mission states that 'ASU is committed to offering an education that is accessible to academically competent students in Bahrain, the Gulf and beyond, and to deliver academic programmes of quality that graduate students equipped with knowledge and skills relevant locally and regionally. ASU is further dedicated to the promotion of a culture of learning and scientific research for its students, staff and faculty, strengthening academic and professional partnerships, and developing networks locally, regionally and globally to engage meaningfully with Bahrain and Gulf community at large.' The College's vision and mission are closely linked to ASU vision and mission, which in general put emphasis on the College's role in offering quality academic programmes, promoting teaching and learning culture, enhancing research, academic and professional partnerships. It also seeks to produce graduates qualified to work in their field of specialisation, with a level of quality appropriate to local and regional market needs. The aims of the programme are also appropriate to level and type of the programme. These aims have been updated and implemented in the study plan of the BGD programme, starting from the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. The programme team has linked the aims of the BGD programme to the University strategic goals and mapped the programme aims to the mission of the College and University after updating these aims to ensure their alignment with the mission of the College and University. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims are aligned to the University's strategic goals, and these in turn have been linked with the vision and mission of the University and College and within a clear academic planning framework.

1.2   The curriculum of BGD programme is well-designed and it allows for a smooth progression from one year to another, by linking the prerequisite courses with the courses that follow, in order to assist students to register their courses in such a way that allows their progression from one year to another. The design of the programme – following its update – is based on the standards of the British Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA-2008), the programme review against the accreditation standards of the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD), external reviewers' feedback, benchmarking with similar universities, the Advisory Board input, and students, graduates and employers surveys. The BGD programme consists of 139 credit hours, distributed over eight semesters and taught

over four years. These 139 credit hours are distributed into theoretical as well as applied courses, including university requirements as well as college requirements, which in turn include compulsory and elective courses. The study load is fairly distributed, to ensure students' graduation in an appropriate period in this type of specialisation. This is done in terms of the number of credit hours in each semester, the minimum and maximum number of hours the student can register in each semester, in addition to an adequate number of practical courses in the curriculum. However, the Panel noted the imbalance between theoretical and practical courses in the BGD programme, with small number of theoretical courses to support the practical ones. Although some information are included within the practical courses, as mentioned by faculty members during the interviews, these do not cover deeply and adequately the requirements of the programme to expand students' knowledge and support them in some subfields of the specialisation. The Panel also noted that there are five courses in History (15 credit hours), namely: History of Ancient and Medieval Art, History of Islamic Art, History of Modern and Contemporary Art, History of Graphic Design, and History and the Culture of Bahrain, in addition to, the small number of credit hours (Six Credit hours) allocated to specialisation electives courses. Students need these courses, which are related to their specialization and correspond to their preferences to support their specialty. Moreover, there is a great deal of overlap in the content of practical courses such Graphic Design 5 (GRD431) and the Graduation Project (GRD433). Furthermore, despite of the significance of the Package Design (Packaging) for a graphic designer, this subject was described as a small part of Graphic Design-3 (GRD332), whereas the rest of the course content deals with advertisement design, which is also significant for a graphic designer. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the contents of the BGD courses to eliminate similar contents, reduce the number of credit hours of history courses, and introduce specialised courses (compulsory and elective) to enrich the programme.

1.3   Course syllabi of the BGD programme are clear and all course files are well designed to include detailed information about the course aims and specifications (course title, code, prerequisite(s), number of credit hours and instructor's name). Moreover, these files include a comprehensive overview on the course content, evaluation, principles of teaching and learning, learning resources and textbooks. The Panel acknowledges that the curriculum - overall - and the courses in terms of their level and intended learning outcomes meet the criteria and standards of the specialisation in general. The Panel also noted that the programme uses relatively new and appropriate computer software. However, although the course contents of the programme are clear and detailed, these are designed in a manner that support practical aspects more than theoretical subjects, which led to an inadequate coverage of some theoretical contents in the programme, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Moreover, the available references are not adequate in terms of quality, modernity, and number, and the Panel did not find evidence that support the use of current research findings and

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professional practice in the course provision. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should provide a larger number of textbooks, references, and teaching resources, and incorporate current research findings and professional practice in the course provision.

1.4   The Programme Intended Learning outcomes (PILOs) – in general – are aligned with the vision and mission of the College by mapping the PILOs to the aims of the programme, which includes five PILOs in Knowledge and Understanding category, five in the Practical Skills category, five in the Cognitive (Intellectual) Skills category, and three in the Transferrable Skills category. This is following the completion of the updated curriculum plan for the academic year 2013-2014, and the review and the benchmarking of the aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme against NASAD's standards by the programme team to re-write the PILOs in a manner that meet these standards. Some of the programme Advisory Board's suggestions, which reflect labour market needs and its expectations of the graduate attributes, were also taken into considered in the revision of the programme. The external examiner report of 2012-2013 pointed to the clarity of the revised PILOs and its relevance to labour market needs and usability for measurement. The Panel also noted that the current PILOs are more clearly written and specific compared to those that existed before the update. Moreover, they cover the intellectual aspects, cognitive skills, practical skills, as well as the required transferrable skills.

1.5   The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are categorized into the four skills categories specified for the programme: Knowledge and Understanding category, Practical Skills category, Cognitive (Intellectual) Skills category, and Transferrable Skills category. These intended learning outcomes are appropriate and meet the requirements of these courses. The Panel was informed that the Department of Design and Arts has conducted a workshop for developing and writing the CILOs, to ensure academic standards. However, the programme team has not mapped the CILOs to the PILOs, and the SER only provides the matrix mapping courses to PILOs. The Panel - from examining the programme and courses documents, and during the interviews with the academic staff of the programme, did not also find evidence on this issue. Moreover, the Panel noted that there are several courses linked to the same intended learning outcomes, especially in the various History courses, and some practical courses, such as Graphic Design-5 (GRD431) and the graduation project (GRD433), as mentioned in paragraph 1.3. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should map the CILOs to the PILOs and review these learning outcomes to avoid duplication, and meet all the requirements to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the programme level.

1.6   The BGD programme at the ASU has a mandatory three-credit internship course (GRD343), which can be taken by students at the end of the third year and after they

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complete (90) credits. The Internship Programme Manual developed by the University specifies the principles and criteria of the internship course including the assessment rubrics, which are appropriate to the nature of the course. The Manual also specifies the responsibilities of the Head of the Internship Unit, the academic supervisor, and students as well as the duration of the training period which is specified as (60) days or (120) hours, as stated in the SER. The Panel noted that the CILOs of this course are clear and consistent with the PILOs of the programme. During the interviews, all relevant stakeholders emphasised the significance of having an internship programme for students to prepare them for the post-graduation stage, and they confirmed that the College is committed to provide a high quality learning experience that enhances student learning during this internship. The Panel appreciates that that the BGD programme has a compulsory internship course, as a mode of learning that helps in preparing the graduates and makes them ready to face the real work environment after graduation.

1.7   ASU has learning and teaching assessment strategy, which includes a range of teaching methods (interactive lectures, group work, independent learning, e-learning) that are appropriate for the BGD programme. Moreover, the Panel noted that course specifications are clear in terms of the methods of teaching used, which are linked to the CILOs of each course, and they are appropriate for the nature of the specialisation. During interviews with the faculty members, alumni, and students, and following the examination of the study plans and course descriptions, the Panel noted that teaching mostly depends on individual and group practical projects, and this is appropriate to the nature of the specialisation. However, there is some duplication in the content of these projects, which the Panel advised to avoid. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the used methods and techniques of teaching, and they mentioned that they prefer more emphasis on the practical aspects, especially practical training, and on some software that are commonly used and required in the labour market. There was a support from the programme management in this aspect, as some recent software have been introduced. The Panel appreciates that there is a formal teaching and learning policy at the university level that is implemented in the BGD programme, and the use of software that are appropriate for the current requirements of the specialisation.

1.8   ASU adopts a detailed assessment policy and arrangements at the University as well as the College level within a general framework that includes procedures appropriate for the type and the level of the programme. These procedures are published and clearly communicated through ASU website, 'Moodle', and course specifications. Assessment for most courses comprises a midterm examination (30%), coursework (20%) which includes homework and practical research, and (50%) for a project or an end of semester examination. Moreover, the assessment methods of different courses are described clearly in the course specifications and distributed over the study weeks.

In order to ensure the integrity and fairness of assessment processes, assessment is subject to internal reviews by internal examiners, and external reviews according to certain criteria stipulated for this purpose. In addition, these processes are consistent with the policy of the University related to internal and external moderation and aim to ensure the appropriateness and the quality of examination questions, as well as the full coverage of the content of the course and the assessment of CILOs. The BGD programme also adopts mechanisms to provide immediate feedback to students on the level of their progress and performance by explaining the model answers in class when returning their answer sheets to identify their mistakes and provide them with the necessary comments. By reviewing the course files and through the Panel interviews with the academic staff and students, it was confirmed that students are provided with oral and written feedback and that the appeal procedures are known and followed. The College Appeal Committee reviews the answer sheets that the students objected on their results and then informs the Admission and Registration Office, which in turn informs the students of the results of their appeals. The Panel appreciates that there are clear assessment, feedback and appeal policies and procedures, which are implemented and well-known to faculty members and students.

1.9   In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The aims of the BGD programme are aligned with the strategic goals of the University and have been linked with the vision and mission of the University and College and within a clear academic planning framework.
- The BGD programme includes a compulsory internship course, as a mode of learning that helps in preparing the graduates and makes them ready to face the real work environment after graduation.
- there is a formal teaching and learning policy at the university level that is implemented in the BGD programme, and the use of software that are appropriate for the current requirements of the specialisation.
- There are clear assessment, feedback and appeal policies and procedures, which are implemented and well-known to faculty members and students.

1.10   In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- revise the contents of the BGD courses to eliminate similar contents, reduce the number of credit hours of history courses, and introduce specialised courses (compulsory and elective) to enrich the programme
- provide a larger number of textbooks, references, and teaching resources, and incorporate current research findings and professional practice in the course provision

- map the course intended learning outcomes to the programme intended learning outcomes and review these learning outcomes to avoid duplication, and meet all the requirements to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the programme level.

1.11 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **the Learning Programme.**

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2.   Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

2.1   ASU follows a clear admission and registration policy, which is published on the University website. This policy requires at least a 60% score in the secondary school certificate and allows an exception for students with one year of work experience supported by an experience certificate from the employer. Additionally, these students have to pass an admission interview by a committee consisting some faculty members as a condition to their admission, provided that the percentage of these students should not be more than 5% of the total number of admitted students in that semester. Admitted students also have to take a placement test in English at the University to determine their level in this language. As for students transferred from other universities or institutions, they also have to sit in for an interview with an academic committee, provided that the percentage of the remaining period of their study is not less than 34% of the total credit hours of the BGD programme. However, the policy does not include a preparatory or aptitude admission test to assess students' artistic or creative capabilities to ensure that they meet the criteria to succeed in this specialisation, which requires some skills readiness and the desire to be involved in a creative work. This requires a modification in the admission criteria of the programme to be appropriate for the nature of study in the Department. By examining the course files, the Panel noted the weak level of some students in the practical courses. The faculty members interviewed by the Panel also confirmed the need for conducting aptitude tests for the applicants as a condition to be admitted in the Department of Arts and Design and for enrolment in the BGD programme to achieve the aims and outcomes of the programme. Furthermore, and although there are minutes of department and college council meetings showing the need for having an aptitude test as a condition for admission, and this was forwarded to the University Council, the test was not implemented in the academic year 2015-2016. Therefore, the Panel recommends that College should conduct aptitude tests for applicants as a condition for admission to ensure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

2.2   The BGD programme requires that the admitted students have to be at a certain educational level to be qualified for enrolment. One of the most important admission criteria is the high school certificate, which is a minimum requirement for admission in undergraduate programmes in Bahrain. This certificate seems appropriate for the BGD programme, which is delivered in Arabic. In addition, there is an English placement test, to determine the students' level in this language to be able to study English as compulsory university requirement in the programme and to enable students to refer to foreign sources in writing their reports and research. The total

number of students admitted in the first year of the BGD programme for the last four years was 11, 18, 20, and 19 respectively, in addition to 17 transferred students. The percentage of female students is more than male students in the programme, with 11.6% for males and 88.3% for females in the current academic year 2015-2016. The high school scores of students admitted in the first year of the programme ranged between 60 and 98% for the academic years 2005-2013. The statistics provided by the Admission and Registration Office confirmed that all students complete their studies in the programme within the specified period of study. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that the students admitted in the programme satisfy the admission conditions and criteria of the programme in its current status.

2.3   According to the organizational structure of the College of Arts and Science and the Department of Design and Arts, the responsibility of the programme management falls on the programme coordinator and the team of the programme. The programme team's recommendations for the improvement and development of the programme are based on regular reviews and benchmarking with similar programmes, in consultation with the Head of Department (HoD) and the Dean, in accordance with the responsibilities of the programme management stated in University Quality Assurance Manual. The Programme Coordinator is also responsible for the development of the study plan, identifying faculty members, course coordinators, and students' representatives, conducting regular meetings with them, and assigning their roles and responsibilities, as well as keeping the faculty members informed of the expected and the targeted levels of achievement. On the other hand, faculty members and course coordinators are responsible for the delivery of courses using the teaching and learning methodologies, techniques, and strategies specified by the University policies, implementing all procedures of the Quality Assurance (QA) of courses, and providing academic and non-academic support for students. The BGD programme is managed through the mandates of the Department Council, College Council, and various committees with regard to all academic aspects of the programme. This takes place through regular monthly meetings which outcomes are submitted to the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Development and then to the University Council. Students are also involved in the delivery of the programme by their representative's participation in departmental meetings, who presents his/her colleagues' views and issues for discussion and settlement. The interviews with academic and administrative staff confirmed that students are aware of their responsibilities in relation to the programme, and the Panel appreciates that there are clear lines of responsibility regarding the management of the programme.

2.4   The programme has a sufficient number of academic staff to teach core courses as well as those related to the BGD programme. There are four faculty members teaching the core courses, two of whom are Professors, one Associate Professor and one Assistant Professor. The students to staff ratio is appropriate, since the total number of registered

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students for the current academic year is 79, and this meets the HEC requirements. All faculty members teaching the core courses have the qualifications and specialisations required to deliver the current courses of the programme, in addition to other academic staff from the Interior Design specialization and other departments who participate in teaching the common courses. The Panel also noted that the workload of faculty members is consistent with the relevant bylaws and it allows them to be involved in research and publication, and this was confirmed by the faculty members during their interviews. Furthermore, the Panel examined the faculty research and confirmed that the published and accepted research for publication are related to the specialisation, in terms of their titles and the field of specialisation. After checking the publishing entity and the acceptance of the research paper, ASU offers the required financial support, such as conference travel cost, attendance and publication fees, in support of scientific research. The Panel appreciates faculty members' involvement in research, and the institution's support for them to achieve the aims of the programme in this aspect.

2.5   ASU has a dedicated administration for human resources (HR) management, and the College follows clear policies for recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention through this administration. The interviews showed that academic and administrative staff are aware of these procedures and these are clear to them. The College has an annual plan to meet its requirements based on the number of students and the specific needs of each programme. The recruitment mechanism includes an interview with applicants by a committee formed by the College Dean. This committee is responsible for interviewing the applicants and make a shortlist of those qualified for the job and makes recommendations to the Department Council, taking into consideration the broad and narrow field of their specialisations, their degrees, and previous expertise. Then, the Department Council recommendation is forwarded to the College Council, which in turn forwards it to the central recruitment committee, based on the supporting documents and stated regulations. Moreover, there is an implemented annual appraisal procedure for faculty members in the BGD programme, which is carried by the Head of Department (HoD) to determine their efficiency and capability in teaching the courses of the programme using the most appropriate available resources. This is done based on academic staff appraisal survey. In order to maintain transparency in this regard, the appraisal results are shared with the faculty member, who reserves his/her right to appeal against his/her appraisal results within a specified period, according to the University regulations. However, the Panel noted that the appraisal form, which the HoD uses does not emphasise enough on research, and it lacks other elements essential for promotion such as university service, community engagement, and professional activity. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should review the appraisal form to give more emphasis on the aspects related to research, and add those elements that need to be considered for the purpose of faculty promotion, in line with the mission of the College and the goals of the

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University. The promotion procedures of faculty members are consistently, fairly and transparently implemented according to a certain mechanism, and in accordance with the Promotion Bylaw issued in 13 October 2013. In accordance to these procedures, one faculty member was promoted to an Associate Professor during the academic year 2015-2016. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the University is always keen to retain its faculty members by providing an appropriate work environment and continuous support with regard to research and publication. Moreover, there are arrangements in place for newly-recruited staff orientation; the HoD introduces new faculty members to the policies and bylaws adopted by the College and the Department's programmes, in addition to their participation in various induction sessions, which constitutes an appropriate framework for their involvement in the University environment. The Panel appreciates that there are clear and followed procedures for faculty members' recruitment, orientation, promotion and retention.

2.6 ASU has several information management systems such as Student Information System (SIS) in the Registration and Admission Office, which enables students and faculty members to access the courses offered, student information and their GPAs, and course timetables, by using their passwords. Students' grades are also entered automatically on this system and student lists are uploaded to academic advisors. Moreover, the University, since the academic year 2013, has been using the ORACLE SIS system, which was developed and introduced by an agreement with Al-Yarmouk University in Jordan in 2011, at the administrative service level. This is in addition to the HR management system (Digital Campus System), which enables academic and administrative staff to accomplish all their administrative related issues. The system also enables them to upload the short CVs of all staff members. The Panel acknowledges that the information management systems are implemented in the University, inform decision-making process, and provide the University with appropriate data.

2.7 ASU follows certain policies and procedures to ensure the safety and security of student record using an ICT back-up and recovery plan, which allows the storage, copying, and retrieving of students' data. The University checks the safety of the system regularly to ensure that it is functioning properly. In the academic year 2013-2014, the University issued the Information Confidentiality Policy. The students' semester grades are entered by the course instructor on the SIS, by using a secret number; therefore, no other person can access the system or alter these grades. The procedures followed require the HoD's approval, then the Dean's approval before grades are endorsed and forwarded to the Admission and Registration Office to ensure their conformity with those entered by the course instructor, their safety and security, and the accuracy of results. During the interviews, the programme team mentioned that the Department intends to establish an Examination Monitoring Unit at the College level, to enhance the procedures of ensuring examination rigor and

security. During the site visit tour of the Panel on campus, it was also confirmed that there are procedures in place regarding the safety and security of records and digital programmes. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures in place, which are implemented consistently to ensure the safety and security of student records and the accuracy of results.

2.8   During the site visit, the Panel toured the various facilities of the University including lecture halls and laboratories, and it was confirmed that these are adequate to the number of the students, and equipped with various display equipment and modern computers, which are available for the students to use during their study hours. The University has also a large auditorium which can hold 200 people, and it is used for the University activities as well other events and also for hosting different lectures. Moreover, the University has a hall for students' activities where they can exercise simple sport activities. Furthermore, there are sitting areas in each floor of the building, in addition to the cafeteria, which is provided with Wi-Fi service. The University also provides the required technical services, which are appropriate to student needs, and all the computers are equipped with software that are suitable for Graphic Design. Furthermore, the University provides e-mail services for all academic and administrative staff as well as students. In addition, each faculty member is provided with a desktop computer and a laptop. The Panel appreciates that there are adequate technical services and number of lecture halls and laboratories that are well equipped to meet the needs of the students and those of the academic and administrative staff. During interviews, the students expressed their satisfaction about the various services and facilities on campus, and they unanimously agreed that the University needs to provide more car parking spaces, preferably roofed due to the weather condition in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Panel encourages the University to respond to this request. The Panel also noted, during the site visit tour, the lack of labels in some departments and centres on campus, and that some academic staff share offices with each other. Moreover, both BGD and Bachelor of Interior Design (BID) students use the walls of the corridors for exhibiting their works, which is a normal and common practice, as some of these walls have been prepared for this purpose. However, it was noted that some walls are not prepared in the same way and some students' works have already been posted on these walls. Nevertheless, the Panel was informed during the interviews that the administration intends to build an additional floor and provide more spaces that allow each faculty member to have his/her own office. The Panel recommends that the College should expedite the construction of the additional floor in order to provide more offices, appropriate spaces, and more privacy for faculty members and students especially during marking and research. As for the library, the Panel found that it is relatively small in size, although it has 23,000 printed books and 100,000 electronic books because the University has a subscription in a number of e-libraries; however, the library largely lacks specialised books on Graphic Design, especially those translated or written in Arabic since the programme is

delivered in Arabic. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should provide adequate number of learning resources, textbooks, references, specialised leading journals and periodicals that are commonly used in the specialisation.

2.9   The usage of the e-learning system and of the Library e-resources is tracked by using the tracking capabilities built into Moodle and the Library Information System. These systems are also used to generate reports on the usage of the library learning resources as well as of the e-learning system. The website administrator submits reports to the College Dean assessing the use of this site, whereas laboratories usage is tracked manually, as demonstrated during the site visit tour. The Panel acknowledges the availability of tracking systems that determine the usage of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources and these systems provide the team of the BGD programme with the required data to generate relevant reports. The SER states that these systems assist the programme leader in assessing the usage of various learning resources and taking necessary decisions for development and improvement. The Panel encourages the College to develop a mechanism to utilize the outcomes of these reports, as no evidence were provided on how these reports are used in informing the decisions of the College.

2.10   ASU has a Technical Support Unit with five IT specialists. A staff member is also available in this Unit to support students and staff and introduce them to the available resources, and explain to them how to use the e-learning system and the University website. Moreover, all computer laboratories are connected to the Internet and the Wi-Fi service allows students' devices to be connected to the Internet across campus. The Library also has six full-time employees available to assist students on the use of the learning resources they need. Additionally, a training workshop is organised for students at the beginning of each semester to inform them on how to utilise the library resources. Each laboratory has also a full-time technician to provide support to the students and academic staff. Furthermore, each student is assigned to an academic advisor who can advise and guide the student academically and, probably, on various problems that the student could face. In addition, the Office of Student Counselling under the Deanship of Student Affairs provides advice, consultancy, and social and psychological problem solving support for students and contacts their parents in order to solve their academic problems and overcome their learning difficulties. The University also organises a number of annual seminars dealing with social awareness, learning difficulties, etc. Moreover, the University provides the required support to students with disability at all its facilities, such as special paths, provisions, lifts, etc. to enable them reach any point on campus. Overall, the Panel acknowledges that the level of student support is satisfactory, and this was confirmed by the students and alumni met by the Panel. They expressed their satisfaction about the support provided to them by the University in relation to the laboratories, library, and academic advising and counselling.

2.11   According to the 'New and Transferred Students Advising Procedures' included in the Student Manual and the University policy on student advising, the Deanship of Student Affairs and the Admission and Registration Office are responsible for the induction of new as well as transferred students from other institutions. An orientation day is organised for this purpose to welcome new students and guide them through the different facilities of the University and its systems. This is done by distributing some booklets, and giving short seminars by key staff and faculty members. Moreover, two members of the Student Council accompany these students in a tour on campus facilities and the library to be aware of the services provided by the institution. Alternative orientation sessions are arranged for students who are not able to attend the orientation day, by referring them directly to their academic advisors to guide them on how to choose from the courses offered in the first semester, and to ensure the completion of their induction about the University and its facilities. As for, the students transferred to the programme after the first year of study, the Admission and Registration Office directly refers them to the staff member who is responsible for the equivalency of courses at the specialisation level. The student who misses the orientation programme also has to contact the Dean of Student Affairs who takes the necessary actions in this regard in accordance with the University regulations. The interviews with academic, administrative staff and students confirmed the effectiveness of the University orientation programme, which also collects and analyses input from newly admitted and transferred students for early diagnosis and treatment of the problems and difficulties these students might face in their new academic environment. The Panel appreciates that there is an orientation policy and procedures for newly admitted and transferred students that meet their needs.

2.12   ASU has a system to support and follow up the students-at-risk according to certain procedures to track the progress of these students and prevent them from reaching the status of academic failure, especially those whose total GPAs are less than 62%. This is done through a meeting held by the Deanship of Student Affairs with students at the beginning of every semester to explain cases of academic underperformance and the early treatment of these cases. The Admission and Registration Office also officially notifies students once their GPAs fall down closer to academic failure. Moreover, the Office provides all deanships and academic departments with a list of at-risk students in each semester. In its turn, the Department circulates these lists to academic advisors and each advisor identifies the courses these students are underperforming based on the data extracted from the University information systems and communicates with the instructors of these courses seeking their input to solve the problem. Then, an official notification is sent to each at-risk student individually to communicate with his/her academic advisor to discuss the causes of his/her unsatisfactory performance and to agree on the appropriate assistance and support they require. Moreover, each at-risk student – through his/her academic advisor - has to fill in a special course registration form where they have to repeat each course they have failed as well as

those whose in which his/her score is less than 60% in an attempt to improve their GPA. Moreover, there is also a special form describing the problems facing the students and documenting the procedures taken and advices given to these students by their advisors. Copies of all these forms are kept in the students' records. The Dean of Student Affairs also follows up the progress of at-risk students and ensures that they receive adequate support through the regular meetings with their academic advisors. Furthermore, the Department follows up and discusses the progress of at-risk students during its meetings, and this was verified by the evidence provided. Students and academic advisor whom the Panel met expressed their satisfaction about the effectiveness of ASU's academic advising system and the Panel appreciates that there are a clear system and procedures that are implemented to follow up and support at-risk students.

2.13   ASU provides a learning environment that is appropriate to enrich students' knowledge and experience through the ICT services provided by a group of technicians. The University provides computers that are connected to the Internet as well as digital display units distributed across the colleges. The University also organises a set of activities to create appropriate learning environment that provides students with various experiences during the years of their study. The Panel appreciates the coordination and collaboration between the BID and BGD programmes during the participation of students in extracurricular activities. Both programmes put emphasis on the site visits to relevant locations, museums, and exhibition organised in Bahrain, in addition to the seminars and training workshops organized by the Department to encourage self-development, innovation, and competition. However, the Panel noted that these activities lack the required level of specification, as most of them could be listed as activities of general interest. Therefore, the Panel suggests inviting more local and international professionals in the fields of Graphic and Interior Design regularly, as proposed during the interviews with the alumni and students, who found such matter significant to broaden their knowledge and perspectives during their years of study.

2.14   In coming to its *conclusion* regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There are clear lines of responsibility regarding the management of the programme.
- Faculty members' involvement in research, and the institution's support for them to achieve the aims of the programme in this aspect.
- There are clear procedures for the recruitment, orientation, promotion and retention of academic staff.
- There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of student records and the accuracy of their results.

- There are adequate technical services and number of lecture halls and laboratories that are well-equipped to meet the needs of the students and those of the academic and administrative staff.
- There are a defined policy and procedures for the orientation for newly admitted students that meet their needs.
- There are a clear system and procedures that are implemented to follow up and support at-risk students.
- The coordination and collaboration between the BID and the BGD programmes during the participation of students in extracurricular activities.

2.15   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- conduct aptitude tests for applicants as a condition for admission to ensure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme
- review the appraisal form to give more emphasis on the aspects related to research, and add those elements that need to be considered for the purpose of faculty promotion, in line with the mission of the College and the goals of the University
- expedite the construction of the additional floor in order to provide more offices, appropriate spaces, and more privacy for faculty members and students especially during marking and research
- provide adequate number of learning resources, textbooks, references, specialised leading journals and periodicals.

2.16   **Judgment**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme.**

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3.   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

3.1   Academic standards of graduates are clear at the University level and they are clearly specified in the programme specification as intended learning outcomes linked to the programme aims. Moreover, the aims and the CILOs are clearly specified in detail in the course syllabi. These CILOs have been formulated according to NASAD standards and they are derived from the programme aims and its PILOs. The aims of the programme are also aligned with the College mission, which aspires to produce graduates equipped with the intellectual and practical skills that enable them to enter the labour market and contribute in community development and service. The Panel appreciates that the graduate attributes are clearly expressed in the PILOs and closely linked to the aims of the programme. During the interviews, the team of the programme emphasised that these graduate attributes are ensured by assessment, and the design of the mid semester and final examination covers the various intellectual aspects as well the practical and cognitive skills, whereas other student works measure the transferrable skills. However, the Panel notes that methodology used to determine the achievement of PILOs does not allow the measurement of each individual outcome achievement, and consequently graduate attributes cannot be ensured through assessment, as discussed in paragraph 3-4 in the Report. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should reconsider the methodology used to measure the achievement of PILOs.

3.2   ASU adopts a clear policy on benchmarking, through which the programme management seeks 'to be abreast with recent development and updates in the field of specialisation both locally and internationally, by updating the programme in accordance with the latest norms and standards in line with the specific status of the labour market in Bahrain and Gulf region'. The BGD programme has been updated based on a set of standards and reference points, including the NASAD standards, the validation of three external reviewers, in addition to benchmarking with several local, regional, and international universities before and after updating the programme. The inputs of the Programme Advisory Board and students were also taken in consideration. The review process covered the programme aims, graduate attributes, learning outcomes, subject courses, and teaching, learning and assessment methods. Moreover, these standards, reviews and benchmarking reports are discussed during the department and college council meetings, as well as during the meetings of the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) and the BGD Programme Advisory Board to make the relevant changes and improvement decisions, which included omitting, transferring, and adding some courses, as shown in the minutes of some of these meetings. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence of formal benchmarking and the scope of

current benchmarking activities is limited to the study plan and the number of credits with no reference to the content of courses. Moreover, the external reviewers' reports relied on questionnaires rather than on analysis and evaluation. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should use the benchmarking policy in a more professional way, benchmark the programme officially with the standards of professional bodies and leading graphic design programmes, and expand the scope of benchmarking activities to include admission criteria, learning resources, and the methods used in assessing and measuring the learning outcomes.

3.3   ASU's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy states that 'the assessment processes should be transparent and clearly communicated to students, external examiners, and other relevant stakeholders'. The Panel notes that this policy is clearly defined and available for all relevant stakeholders through the University catalogue, course specifications, the university website, and the Moodle platform, in addition to all the materials that are sent to the external examiners. This is also the case for assessment feedback, which is well-defined in the above policies and there is evidence that it is systematically communicated to the students. The assessment policy also describes the followed assessment strategies, which include formative and summative assessment, its frequency, and the parties responsible for it. ASU's QA Manual also defines the responsibilities of the academic staff, course coordinators, in relation to the implementation of this policy. The SER refers to the importance of intended learning outcomes measurement and the need to enhance the learning process through assessment, in accordance with the University policy of teaching, learning, and assessment. This policy also stresses that the design of assessment tools should be aligned with the intended learning outcomes and the level of the programme while ensuring the effectiveness and fairness of assessment and promoting good academic practices. As for plagiarism, the University has some arrangements in place to prevent plagiarism. However, the implementation of these arrangements remains fragile and not strict, as evident in most of the plagiarised works submitted by students and awarded good grades. Moreover, the Panel is concerned that the University has specified a threshold of 20% on plagiarism in the students' works that are submitted through Turnitin, which is used by the College to check the graduation projects and authenticate their contents without checking the detected plagiarised contents. Moreover, the Panel noted some plagiarised students' works in the studios, the University corridors, and the course files and commented on this during the site visit tour and interviews with faculty members. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a strict policy in relation to Plagiarism and the protection of intellectual property rights, implement the procedures related to the detection of plagiarism in all the works submitted by students and raise their awareness about the broad concept of plagiarism.

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3.4   Course specification includes the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning methods, and the assessment tools. The programme team confirmed that the CILOs are aligned with the PILOs, the aims of the programme and the College mission, as explained in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5 in the Report. A special university form is used to demonstrate the alignment between assessment tools of each course and the CILOs of that course, and to produce an assessment report. These CILOs are expected to be assessed at the level of each individual course and collectively at the programme level. Furthermore, this assessment should include all learning outcomes, as stated by the University policy of learning, teaching, and assessment. Additionally, and in line with ASU's policies and procedures, the BGD programme depends on internal and external moderation of assessment to ensure the appropriateness and the alignment of assessment tools with the intended learning outcomes. For this purpose, the internal and external examiners are asked, when assessing examination questions, to check 'the validity of the questions to assess the learning outcomes of the course'. However, as mentioned in paragraph 3.1, the Panel is of the view that the methodology employed to determine the achievement of learning outcomes is flawed and there is no way to assert achievement of each learning outcome and to ensure the academic standards of graduates. This is because the linkage is made between assessment tools and the four categories of PILOs and CILOs instead of linking these tools with each individual outcome, to measure its achievement whether at the programme or course level. Moreover, the Panel did not find any evidence on mapping the CILOs of each course to the PILOs, as mentioned in paragraph 1.5 of the Report. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should reconsider the methodology employed to ensure the alignment between assessment and CILOs, and ensure that all programme and course intended learning outcomes are systematically and exhaustively assessed.

3.5   ASU's Assessment and Feedback Policy includes procedures related to internal moderation. According to the policies and procedures followed by the University, one faculty member writes his comments in the evaluation form of examination questions used by the internal examiners for the mid semester and final examinations to assess the extent to which the questions measure the four categories of intended learning outcomes mentioned in all course specifications. This form is submitted to the course coordinator enough time before the examination date to do the necessary changes. During the site visit, the faculty members confirmed that they changed or modified some of the questions based on the internal examiner's feedback, who also reviews students' answers by using the model answer sheet provided by the course coordinator, to check the correctness of the evaluation and the fairness of marks distribution. However, the Panel noted that the internal examiners' feedback tends to be supportive to course instructors. During the interviews, the programme team declared that the College intends to have all student works subject to internal moderation. The SER also mentions that the practical projects in some courses are assessed according to certain criteria adopted by the University, and through

discussions held with committees of faculty members, to which students and sometimes employers are invited. However, the Panel has some concerns because the internal moderation process has failed to identify several serious shortcomings such as plagiarism cases, which raises serious questions about the effectiveness and seriousness of the internal moderation process. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should apply internal moderation to all student works, and develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation of internal moderation procedures and its effectiveness.

3.6   According to the University procedures, all course final examinations and course specifications are sent to external examiners at Al-Yarmouk University in Jordan. The external examiners are asked to write their comments in a specific form adopted by ASU to evaluate final examination questions in terms of depth, comprehensiveness, and coverage of course contents. The external examiners also comment on the questions clarity as well as the extent to which different skills and knowledge are measured. Nevertheless, the Panel noted that the forms used by both the external and internal examiners rely heavily on the questionnaire style, which does not provide enough information on how to improve the examination questions and the extent to which each intended learning outcome is measured. Moreover, the Panel did not find any evidence of external moderation of students' assessed works contrary to what ASU assessment and feedback policies require. The evidence submitted by the programme team indicates that the external examiners' comments are discussed, and faculty members' comments do not sometimes agree with those of the external examiners. One faculty member, for example, recommended that external examiners should be specialised in the same specialisation or familiar with it and they should be highly trust-worthy. Currently, external examiners are selected according to the MoU with Al-Yarmouk University, whereas the procedures listed in the Internal and External Moderation Policies and Procedures Manual indicate that the section of the internal and external examiners should be done by the Department Council. The SER states that the College has not applied yet the updated ASU's policy of external examiner, which includes a detailed description of this role. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should expedite the implementation of updated ASU's policies and procedures, especially those related to the selection of external examiners, and ensure that all methods of assessment and student assessed works by course instructors or different committees are subject to an independent external moderation.

3.7   The SER states that the Department depends on the Advisory Board, which includes a faculty member from another university, benchmarking of assessment methods in the programme, in addition to the internal and external moderation of examination to ensure that students' achievements are appropriate to the type and level of the programme in the Kingdom of Bahrain and in the region. However, and as mentioned in the previous paragraphs in the Report, internal and external moderation processes

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suffer from some shortcomings, where student assessed works are not provided to the external examiners and the failure of the current internal moderation process to identify some plagiarism cases. During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to examine the course files, which demonstrated weakness in students' performance in practical courses compared to their satisfactory performance in the current theoretical courses. The Panel is also concerned that the external examiner's role is not activated to check all students' projects, which reflect the graduates' academic and professional level. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement mechanisms to ensure the level of student works is appropriate for the type and level of programme. The Panel also noted that some of the students' projects used pictures and works of other designers, which cannot be used without the author's permission. Yet, it was not clear to the Panel what actions are taken to deal with this sort of plagiarism. Moreover, Panel has expressed its concerns with the 20% threshold allowed for plagiarism in theoretical research without checking the plagiarised contents, as mentioned in paragraph 3.3.

3.8   The SER states that the course final grades, students' GPAs, in addition to employers and alumni surveys indicate that the level of students' achievement meets the aims and intended learning outcomes of the BGD programme. Moreover, the final grades of the graduates for the last four years prior the site visit (2012-2015) show a normal distribution of grades. The number of graduates for these years was 13, of whom three graduates scored 'Excellent', one 'Satisfactory, four 'Very Good', and five 'Good'. The average GPAs during these years was 78.42%. However, the Panel is not satisfied that currently there is no external moderation of student works and the internal moderation is limited to mid semester and final examinations. Moreover, the Panel has already referred in previous paragraphs of the Report to deficiency of the current mechanism used for internal moderation and the process of aligning the assessment with the learning outcomes. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that these mechanisms need to be reviewed to ensure their effectiveness in ensuring that the level of students' achievement meets the aims of the programme and its intended learning outcomes.

3.9   ASU conducts annual cohort analysis on a regular basis. The latest statistics presented in the SER and the supporting document demonstrate that a small number of students have been admitted and graduated of from the BGD programme. In the academic year 2010-2011, eight students were admitted in the programme and only four of whom have graduated. In the last four academic years, the numbers of admitted students were 15, 21, 20 and 20 respectively and these students are still enrolled in the programme. Furthermore, these statistics indicate a high rate of retention in the College with an attrition rate of 0.06% from 2010 to 2015. The Panel finds that the ratios of admitted students to graduates normal as well as the rates of progression and the length of study which is ranging from eight to nine semesters. However, the Panel is concerned about the high percentage of those graduates who did not find jobs after

graduation, according to the results of graduate surveys. Overall, the Panel appreciates that there are procedures in place for regular cohort analysis, which enable the management of the programme to track the ratios of admitted students, retention, and year-on-year progression, in order to make appropriate decisions for improvement. The Panel encourages the programme management to investigate the reasons why some students cannot find jobs after graduation.

3.10   The College of Arts a Science follows the University policy and procedures related to the evaluation the internship course, which is a compulsory requirement of the BGD programme. A student can register in this course after successful completion of 90 credit hours of the specialisation courses. Students' performance is assessed at their work place by weekly achievement reports, and an evaluation form to be used by the internship supervisor, which includes a questionnaire on the achievement of some cognitive, practical, professional, and general skills. This form is allocated 30% of the final grade. Moreover, the final report submitted by each student is evaluated by a committee composed of the academic supervisor, who is allocated 40% of the grade, and two other faculty members who are allocated 30% of the total grade. The committee assesses the student final report according to the rubrics adopted by the College, and he/she discusses it with this committee. However, the Panel has some reservations due to the heavy reliance of the programme on students in finding their own internship hosts, as they mentioned during interviews, which is a violation of the College procedures, which stipulate that this is responsibility of the head of the Internship Unit. With regard to the size of the labour market and the completion of with other universities, it is difficult for students to find an appropriate training place and to ensure the acquisition of a balanced and appropriate experience for these students. Furthermore, some of the Advisory Board members and employers referred to their incapability to have a large number of trainees and the unreadinesses of students because they lack some skills required in the labour market such as printing techniques and the use of certain design software. However, the programme team have responded to such comments and they have recently trained their students on some graphic design software. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should follow the procedures related to the selection and the distribution of internship places, to ensure a balanced and appropriate experience for the students in the programme.

3.11   The BGD programme study plan includes two graduation project courses, namely Graduation Project1 and Graduation Project 2. The first course is a prerequisite for the second one and students accomplish them individually in the last year of the programme. Each student chooses his/her topic for the graduation project in Graduation Project 1 from a list of topics prepared by the team of the programme. The course supervisor assists students to determine the domain of the topic, research problem, hypotheses and limitations in order to produce complete graphic designs in

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Graduation Project 2. The course specifications of both courses specify the intended learning outcomes and the assessment methods. Students are assessed according to certain criteria specified in the project document and by a committee of faculty members, which sometimes includes an external member specialised in Graphic Design to discuss the project report and the project itself. Additionally, the course supervisor also evaluates of the progress of students during the discussions made while writing the report and the execution of the project. The Panel acknowledges that there are followed procedures and specified criteria for the evaluation of the graduation report and project. Students and alumni interviewed by the Panel praised the support they received from faculty members during the preparation of their graduation reports and projects. However, the Panel is not satisfied with the procedures followed in relation to plagiarism and not having student works subject to an external independent moderation, as mentioned in the paragraphs 3.6 and 3.8 in the Report.

3.12 ASU has an advisory board policy for its different programmes, to contribute to the development of these programmes and ensure their relevance to the labour market requirements. The Advisory Board of the BGD programme includes eight members of whom four members are academic and administrative staff at the College, and four employers specialised in Graphic Design. The University policy clearly identifies the mandates of the Advisory Board, the appointment procedures of its members and chair, membership criteria and duration, and the minimum number of meeting per semester. The evidence provided by the programme team and the interviews with the Advisory Board members indicate the effective contribution of the Advisory Board to the development of the programme, despite the paucity of its meetings and the irregular schedule of these meetings. The Panel appreciates that there is a functioning Advisory Board, which contributes to the development of the BGD programme and ensures its relevance to labour market needs. The Panel encourages the College to ensure that the Advisory Board meets regularly according to the University policy, which specifies at least one meeting every semester, in order to benefit more from its feedback.

3.13 ASU's QA Manual highlights the importance of monitoring the satisfaction of stakeholders to evaluate whether their needs and requirements have been met. As such, students, employers and alumni surveys are conducted regularly. The collected data are analysed and included in the in the College of Arts and Science's Yearly Book of surveys, which are discussed at the various University levels. The alumni survey indicates their satisfaction about the level of teaching and services they received at ASU, where their satisfaction indicator on teaching, activities, and services scored 78%, which was confirmed during their interviews at the time of the site visit. Some Advisory Board members mentioned that they have been receiving students since five years ago as their potential employers and they provided training opportunities for

some of them. By supervising these students - the members added – they were able to identify some areas for improvement in which students require more training such as handcraft skills, teamwork, printing techniques and measurements, creativity and innovation. Moreover, the interviewed alumni - based on labour market requirements - referred to the need for more emphasis on practical subjects, especially those related to handcrafts, 3D computer software, and packaging, which is highly demanded in the market. Therefore, the Panel urges the College to respond to these recommendations, which are also in line with the Panel's recommendations in the Report.

3.14   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- Graduate attributes are clearly expressed in the programme intended learning outcomes, and closely linked to the aims of the programme.
- There are procedures in place for regular cohort analysis, which enable the management of the programme to track the ratios of admitted students, retention, and year-on-year progression, in order to make appropriate decisions for improvement.
- There is a functioning Advisory Board, which contributes to the development of the BGD programme and ensures its relevance to labour market needs.

3.15   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- reconsider the methodology used to measure the achievement of the programme intended learning outcomes
- use the benchmarking policy in a more professional way, benchmark the programme officially with the standards of professional bodies and leading graphic design programmes, and expand the scope of benchmarking activities to include admission criteria, learning resources, and the methods used in assessing and measuring the learning outcomes
- develop a strict policy in relation to plagiarism and the protection of intellectual property rights, implement the procedures related to the detection of plagiarism in all the works submitted by students and raise their awareness about the broad concept of plagiarism
- reconsider the methodology employed to ensure the alignment between assessment and the course intended learning outcomes, and ensure that all programme and course intended learning outcomes are systematically and exhaustively assessed
- apply internal moderation to all student works, and develop a mechanism to monitor the implementation of internal moderation procedures and its effectiveness
- implement the ASU's policies and procedures, especially those related to the selection of external examiners, and ensure that all assessment methods as well as

student assessed works by course instructors or different committees are subject to an independent external moderation

- develop and implement mechanisms to ensure the level of student works is appropriate for the type and level of programme
- follow the procedures related to the selection and the distribution of internship places, to ensure a balanced and appropriate experience for the students in the programme.

3.16   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates.**

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4. Indicator 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.

4.1 ASU has several policies and procedures related to programme management and delivery such as Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Assessment and Feedback Policy, Benchmarking Policy and Programme and Course Coordinators Responsibilities. The QA Manual provides clear evidence that the QA management process is designed in such a way that ensures the effectiveness of each policy. The policies related to students and staff are available on 'Moodle' and the University website. The interviewed students also confirmed their awareness of these policies and they expressed their satisfaction about their regular implementation. Based on the provided documents and interviews with students, academic and administrative staff, and QA staff, the Panel appreciates the presence of general policies and procedures appropriate to the management of the programme that is fairly implemented with the participation of relevant stakeholders.

4.2 The management structure of the BGD programme is starting from the institutional level to the course coordinator level passing by the Dean, the HoD and the programme coordinator. During interviews, the Panel learnt that the Dean is getting the support of the Vice- Dean and the HoD to ensure the proper application of the policies and procedures related to the delivery of the programme and to monitor the performance. The College has gone through recent appointments of its management team who is currently supported by the senior academic and administrative staff to maintain academic standards and oversee the development and implementation of academic strategic planning. As for the academic decisions, these are the responsibility of the Department Council, College Council and standing committees, with the HoD's support, and then the Dean's approval. The final approval decision falls in the hands of the University Council. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the programme management in terms of demonstrating effective and responsible leadership is satisfactory.

4.3 ASU's QA Manual describes ASU's QA management system as well as procedures for the preparation of documents such as SERs needed for external QA of programmes. During its meeting with the QA staff, the Panel learnt that the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) of ASU, is responsible for managing and monitoring these policies and procedures in all academic programmes since twelve months ago. The interviews also referred to the existence of a clear organizational chart where the QAAC provides periodical reports to the Quality Assurance Council of the University, which is chaired by the University President. QAAC coordinates regularly with the

College and the programme team *via* the QA Director of the College. During the interviews with the QAAC staff and the administrative and academic staff, the Panel was informed that the QAAC manages and monitors the implementation of all policies and procedures at the University level. The QA Director of the College also ensures consistency and collaboration in implementing these policies at the level of all programmes and is responsible for maintaining the standards of the QA across the College. The QA Director chairs the College QAU and plays a fundamental role in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of all these policies. The interviews also confirmed the involvement of the academic and administrative staff in the QA processes at both the institutional and programme levels. However, and as discussed in Indicator 3 of the Report, the Panel is concerned about student assessment in a number of courses and recommends that the College should ensure that the QAU monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of the assessment policies and procedures of student works.

4.4   ASU faculty have access to several documents, including the QA Manual from which they can acquire an adequate understanding of QA and their role in ensuring the effectiveness of provision. During the various site visit interviews, senior and junior staff the Panel met were very much aware of the internal QA system and involved, to some degree, in quality assuring their day-to-day duties. Moreover, a number of workshops and trainings have been conducted on QA, the requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and other topics such as Moodle and ASU's strategic Plan, during the academic years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016. More precisely, some training workshops were conducted on Bloom's taxonomy, assessment and effective academic advising, which were attended by a large number of faculty members. This was also confirmed during interviews with QAAC staff and other faculty members. Overall, it was clear to the Panel that all academic staff in the Department of Arts and Design have a good understanding of the QA policies of the University as some of them have administrative tasks, which made them directly involved in various QA efforts. As a result, of this involvement along with all the conducted training workshops, academic staff have a good understanding of QA and their role in the entire chain of QA at ASU, and this was felt by the Panel during the site visit.

4.5   ASU has a 'New Programme-Development Policy and Procedures' that has recently been introduced in the academic year 2015-2016. There is also a curriculum committee at the University level, which is responsible for approving new programmes. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of the various parties responsible for the inception and validation of these programmes are explained in the QA Manual. The SER also provides a flow chart that describes the procedure to develop and update the curriculum of a programme, taking into consideration the inputs of various relevant stakeholders. During meetings with QA staff and faculty members, the Panel was

informed that the policy and procedures are implemented by all departments, and all programmes are subject to review every five years to ensure their relevance and fitness for purpose. The Panel was also informed that the University is now moving to a period where all new programmes will be designed so as to be consistent with the NQF requirements, whereas the policy and procedures for the development of new programmes are going to be implemented starting September 2016. The Panel acknowledges that the recently developed policy and procedures are appropriate and stipulate the main requirements for developing and approving new programmes.

4.6   Policies and procedures are in place for the annual internal programme evaluations and improvements as shown in the University policy for developing, improving, and reviewing the offered programmes and in ASU's QA Manual. These documents show that each programme team conducts an annual programme review, among other reviews planned by ASU for QA purposes. The annual programme review is meant to be a self-critical review of the programme and its operation over the academic year. It is also expected to take into account various quantitative and qualitative indicators and eventually produce a review report (the Programme Evaluation Document) with action plans for the programme improvement. This must, in turn, be discussed at various levels (College and QAAC) before being validated and sent back to the Department for implementation, as shown in the chart included in the University Policy for Programme Development and Review. The SER also asserts that the BGD programme is evaluated internally at the end of each academic year, as stipulated in the policies. This has been confirmed during the site visit interviews with the programme management. Moreover, the changes introduced in the BGD programme serve as evidence on this review and the implementation of recommendations approved by the College Council. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures in place to evaluate the BGD programme annually and internally and there are action plans for improvement that have been implemented. The Panel encourages the College to expand its mechanism to include the programme's output.

4.7   The periodic review policy adopted by the BGD programme employs internal and external sources such as student, alumni and employers' feedback, and Advisory Board input, in addition to external reviewers from regional universities the programme is collaborating with, and benchmarking with other academic institutions. The periodic review also includes student course evaluation and academic advisors' reports, in addition to internal examiners' remarks and internship reports. The University QAAC also follows up the frequency of these periodic reviews in collaboration with the QAU at the College level as well the Academic Department. During interviews, the programme team confirmed that benchmarking with other comparable programmes, stakeholders' surveys and both internal and external feedback led to major improvements in the BGD programme during the recent revision. They also confirmed that the programme review policy, which is included in

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the QA Manual, was followed in the 2015-2016 programme review. In general, the Panel appreciates that there is a policy for five-year major evaluations of ASU programmes involving internal and external feedback, which is followed during major revisions of the BGD programme. The Panel is of the view that the future reviews of the Programme needs to consider the diversity of external reviewers, who should be of an outstanding academic background in the field of Graphic Design.

4.8   The Programme collects structured comments regularly from students, members of the Advisory Board and other stakeholders through surveys and meetings. The statistical results of surveys, which are assembled into statistical reports, are analysed by the University Information Unit. The Department Council considers student course evaluations and the results of questionnaires as indicators for the graduates' satisfaction of the quality of the programme, as stated in the SER, which also refers to the alumni's satisfaction with the programme. This has been confirmed during the interviews the Panel had with students, alumni, members of the Advisory Board, and employers who expressed their satisfaction about the programme, and they praised the improvements that have been implemented in response to their feedback. Nonetheless, there is no sufficient evidence to demonstrate that all the collected feedback was fully utilised and that the outcomes are regularly communicated to the alumni or their employers. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that all the collected feedback from relevant stakeholders are analysed and used for the improvement of the BGD programme, and that the outcomes are regularly communicated to the stakeholders to keep them informed about the progress made with regard to their suggestions for improvement.

4.9   ASU has a policy for staff professional development. In 2010-2011, the University established the Academic Staff Development Centre to support staff professional development and ensure their understanding of the University's bylaws and regulations. This is done according to a training plan developed at the beginning of each academic year, in addition to the self-development opportunities provided by the University in terms of publication and specialisation-related conference participation. According to the interviews with the administrative staff, the development needs of academic staff are identified by academic departments and according to the annual appraisal of staff. The Dean assesses and approves these needs prior to their submission to the academic staff unit for inclusion in the University annual training plan of both academic and administrative staff. A large number of workshops and trainings have been conducted during the academic years 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 on QA and other related topics. In meetings with the academic staff, the Panel learnt of their satisfaction with the seminars and workshops provided for their self-development as well as their satisfaction with the support provided by the University for publishing by covering all costs and registration fees of conferences participation and attendance. The Panel appreciates that there are a policy in place and an

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implemented annual professional development plan to enhance the capabilities of academic staff, which meets their individual professional development needs.

4.10   The SER lists five mechanisms that ASU uses to ensure the alignment between the BGD programme objectives and labour market needs, which were confirmed by the relevant stakeholders during the Panel interviews with QA staff, administrative staff, employers, members of the advisory Board, and alumni. These mechanisms include (1) annual surveys of employers who recruited the graduates of the programme, (2) alumni survey to determine course relevance to market needs, (3) feedback from the Advisory Board, (4) feedback from the external examiners and reviewers, and (5) the annual periodic benchmarking of the programme with local, regional, and international universities. In order to be updated with the changes of labour market needs, the College also considers the reports produced by professional organisations in Bahrain such as Tamkeen, in addition to the study conducted by the University with Infora on labour market needs, which was issued in November 2013. However, the Panel is of the view that the findings of Tamkeen study are obsolete by now, and the same thing might be true for Infora study as well, especially in the light of latest local and international economic developments. Moreover, as the SER states, the programme adopts a mechanism to collect data from relevant stakeholders such as the alumni, employers, and Advisory Board members regularly at the end of each semester, in addition to the 'Career Day'. The latter is organized by the University to explore the labour market needs and introduce employers to the BGD programme and the College of Arts and Science. Therefore, the Panel encourages the College to continue with its regular investigation of the market needs for the sake of informed decisions.

4.11   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The presence of general policies and procedures appropriate to the management of the programme that is fairly implemented with the participation of relevant stakeholders.
- There are policies and procedures in place to evaluate the BGD programme annually and internally and there are action plans for improvement that have been implemented.
- There is a policy for five-year major evaluations of ASU programmes involving internal and external feedback, which is followed during major revisions of the BGD programme.
- There are a policy in place and an implemented annual professional development plan to enhance the capabilities of academic staff, which meets their individual professional development needs.

4.12   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- ensure that the Quality Assurance Unit monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the implementation of the policies and procedures relevant to assessments of student works.
- ensure that all the structured comments of relevant stakeholders are gathered, analysed and used for the improvement of the BGD and that the outcomes of the questionnaires and meetings are communicated to the stakeholders on a regular basis.

4.13 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.**

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5.   Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2014*:

There is limited confidence in the Bachelor in Graphic Design of College of Arts and Science offered by the Applied Science University.

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