

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



Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Master of Business Administration
College of Administrative and Financial Sciences
AMA International University - Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 7 - 9 April 2014
HC030-C1-R030**

Table of Contents

Acronyms	2
1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process.....	4
2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme	8
3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme	12
4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates.....	19
5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	26
6. Conclusion.....	33

Acronyms

ACM	Association for Computing Machinery
AIS	Association for Information Systems
AMAIUB	AMA International University-Bahrain
APPH	Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook
CAFS	College of Administrative and Financial Sciences
CILO	Course intended learning outcomes
CIS	Campus Information System
CQI	College committee for Continuous Quality Improvement
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
ECBE	European Council for Business Education
FDP	Faculty Development Plan
IFDP	Individual Faculty Development Plans
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HRMS	Human Resource Management System
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MIS	Management Information Systems

PAST	Performance Appraisal System for Teachers
PEO	Programme Educational Objectives
PIAP	Programme Industry Advisory Panel
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAA-UK	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in the United Kingdom
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
QAAO	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office
QMS	Quality Management System
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SES	Self-Evaluation Survey
TLA	Teaching, learning and assessment
TOS	Table of Specifications

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 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 the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) 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 QQA, 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	

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the AMA International University - Bahrain

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 7-9 April 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the college, these are: Bachelor of Science in Business Informatics (BSBI); Bachelor of Science in International Studies (BSIS); and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Master of Business Administration (MBA) based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the AMA International University – Bahrain (AMA-IUB), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

AMA-IUB was notified by the DHR/QQA in October 2013 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of its College of Administrative and Financial Sciences with the site visit taking place on 7-9 April 2014. In preparation for the

review, AMA-IUB conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER with appendices on the agreed date in January 2014.

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

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel based on:

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to AMA-IUB 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 in the MBA.

1.3 Overview of the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences

The College of Administrative and Financial Sciences (CAFS) at AMA International University-Bahrain is one of the first colleges established when the university started operating in 2002. The College aims to produce business leaders by providing students with the necessary knowledge and skills through its commitment to outcome-based education, research and community engagement so that they can respond to the growing needs of global business and industry. It consists of three departments namely: Department of Business Informatics, Department of Business International Studies, and Department of Graduate Studies. The College offers two undergraduate degree programmes; Bachelor of Science in Business Informatics (BSBI), and Bachelor of Science in International Studies (BSIS); and one graduate degree programme, Master of Business Administration. At the time of the site visit, the College had 2183 enrolled students, five administrative staff, 44 full-time and 23

part-time faculty members, who participate in the delivery of the programmes and 58 non-teaching personnel, who provide support to the College.

1.4 Overview of the Master of Business Administration

The Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme aims to provide a learning experience that incorporates functional areas in business in order for the graduate students to become effective managers and leaders of business organizations in a globally competitive and complex business environment. The MBA is one of the programmes approved by the Ministry of Education when AMAIUB started operating in 2002. However, the MBA programme is still under a moratorium since the AY 2011-2012. The MBA programme is under the Department of Graduate Studies. At the time of the site visit, the College had 15 students enrolled in the programme, four administrative staff, 58 non-teaching personnel, and ten full-time and two part-time faculty members, who at the same time, also contribute to the delivery of the bachelor degree programmes of the college. There are a total of 700 MBA graduates since 2004 up to the time of the visit.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Master of Business Administration

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Does Not Satisfy
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Does Not Satisfy
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does Not Satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Does Not Satisfy
Overall Judgement	No Confidence

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 There is an academic framework for the MBA programme intended to deliver the aims of the programme with reference to the Institution's aims. In its interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the mission of the College is to provide access to students who would normally be excluded from tertiary education institutions and to offer them programmes that meet the market needs. In providing management education, the aims of the MBA programme are broadly linked to the mission and vision of the University. The programme has a set of Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) which are mapped to the University mission and to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). The PEOs intend to produce graduates that practice as managers and business specialists to improve the quality of management as a profession, and to promote high ethical standards. The Panel finds that the PEOs are quite general, and not realistic. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the PEOs to be more specific and practical, and to reflect both knowledge and skills for the practice of management professionally.
- 2.2 The curriculum is reasonably organized, with a common core curriculum followed by specializations and research. The Panel finds the offering of nine specializations to be questionable and cumbersome from a teaching point of view, particularly because not all of them address the labor market needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the College has recognized that the content of the curriculum has some redundancy. This has prompted the College to develop a revised curriculum that has been approved by the Academic Council but is not yet implemented due to the moratorium on new student enrollments. The curriculum provides academic progression year-on-year or course by course with a suitable workload for students. However, the Panel is of the view that some courses' titles and contents are not up-to-date and need to be revised in order to meet both the international academic standards and the actual/future needs of the labour market locally and regionally. For example, some advanced courses can be added to the relevant specializations (e.g. Logistics Management, Services Marketing, and Crisis Management), while others can be updated (e.g., Advertising and Promotion, and Strategic Management). The Panel also notes that the theoretical and practical components of the programme need to be enhanced, as the theoretical contents of some courses are more typical of a Bachelor's level course. In addition, more empirical research is needed to ensure the balance of theory and practice in the curriculum. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the curriculum to ensure that it that meets the international academic standards of an MBA programme.

- 2.3 The syllabus is well documented in terms of its breadth and the course specifications contain detailed and relevant information. Upon reviewing course specifications, including teaching and learning methods, the Panel finds that there is insufficient contribution from industry professionals to the teaching process to transfer their practical experiences to the students in the classroom. This was confirmed in interviews with students, employers and alumni. Provided evidence indicate that during the 1st and 2nd trimesters of SY13-14, a total of only six activities with outside speakers took place, thus suggesting that students are not receiving sufficient exposure to best business practice during their studies. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel noted that the use of research findings through additional references is not adequate to expose the students to the local and regional market requirements. The Panel is of the view that the balance between theory and knowledge in teaching needs to be enhanced by the integration of empirical research by faculty members. The Panel recommends that the Department ensure the integration of research findings into teaching and provide greater exposure to best practice in the various types of businesses in Bahrain and the region.
- 2.4 Although broadly stated, the programme's ILOs are aligned with the university mission and programme objectives. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the PILOs are regularly reviewed by the related college committees in light of international standards and feedback from the programme's advisory panel. However, the Panel is of the view that a better alignment of ILOs with the actual local and regional needs, is required. The Panel recommends that the Department review the programme's ILOs to define them more accurately and ensure that they meet the local, regional and international requirements.
- 2.5 Each course in the MBA curriculum has a specific number of ILOs, which are classified into the four categories into the conventional four categories of A: knowledge and skills; B: subject specific; C: thinking skills and D: general transferable skills. Course specifications include a mapping between the CILOs and the course objectives as well as the PILOs. In its meetings with the programme faculty, the Panel was informed that the course and programme ILOs are mapped to ensure a coherent relationship between the educational objectives and intended learning outcomes. Students interviewed by the Panel were aware of key CILOs and their role in achieving the programme objectives. Upon reviewing the CILOs, the Panel noted that the number of ILOs for each course are large and that the mapping from programme level to course level needs is not very accurate. The Panel recommends that the Department reformulate the mapping from programme level outcomes to course level outcomes, to be more accurate, and to reduce the number of CILOs to make a mapping to the PILOs more manageable.

- 2.6 Various teaching methods are used to support the accomplishment of programme aims and ILOs. These include lectures, tutorials, case studies, student presentations, in-class exercises, and group discussion. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they employ various teaching methods to support the achievement of the CILOs and PILOS. The Panel notes that within each course specification, there is an indication to the teaching method for each type of CILO. The Panel appreciates that a reasonable range of integrated teaching methods are used to support the attainment of programme aims and ILOs. However, the Panel is of the view that the alignment of teaching methods in the courses needs to be reviewed in relation to the achievement of the course ILOs. Moreover, more improvements are required for case studies to ensure their alignment to the nature, aims, and ILOs of each course being taught. The Panel recommends that the Department review the alignment of teaching methods to the CILOs to ensure that they support the attainment of the programme's learning outcomes. During interviews, the Panel noted that there is general satisfaction amongst students and graduates with the teaching methods and the availability of faculty members for individual help when needed. The Panel learned from the site visit that development of independent learning is applied to some extent by the provision of supporting facilities to encourage students to use e-learning, such as the e-library and e-references.
- 2.7 Documented policies and procedures on assessment are in place and these are implemented across the College. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel learned that assessment policies are communicated to the students *via* faculty members, the Student Handbook, and *via* 'Moodle'. The Panel also learned that these policies are communicated to the Faculty members *via* Faculty meetings. Faculty members and students interviewed by the Panel were aware of assessment policies and the range of assessment methods used in the MBA programme. Upon examining provided policies, the Panel noted that they do not provide for differentiated policies and procedure that takes into account the needs and level of the MBA programme, other than covering the requirements of the MBA comprehensive examination. Moreover, the guidelines provided on site for teaching and learning that were specifically related to the MBA are merely focused on general procedures in relation to the examinations, and the allocation of notional hours to three-credit courses. There are inadequate guidelines on what and how to teach and assess at an MBA level. This was confirmed in site visit interviews with faculty members and students. The Panel recommends that the Department conduct a thorough review of the assessment policies and procedures to take into account the needs and standards of the MBA programme. During interviews, faculty members informed the Panel that formative and summative assessments are used in various courses. However, MBA students pointed out that, while they receive feedback on their assessments, this practice is carried out in an unorganized and irregular fashion and in isolation from summative assessments. In the view of the Panel, current

formative and summative assessment policies and methods lack synergy and a clear focus on all key intended learning outcomes. The Panel recommends that the Department review the assessment policies to enhance synergy between formative and summative functions, and improve the mechanisms for providing the students with prompt feedback on their progress.

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

- The syllabus is well-documented and course specifications are well prepared and contain detailed and relevant information.
- A reasonable range of integrated teaching methods are used to support the attainment of programme aims and ILOs.

2.9 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- revise the PEOs to be more specific and practical, and to reflect both knowledge and skills in practicing management professionally
- revise the curriculum to ensure that it meets the international academic standards of an MBA programme
- enhance the balance of theory/knowledge and skills/practice in teaching
- ensure the integration of current research findings into teaching and provide greater exposure to best practice in the various types of businesses in Bahrain and the region
- review the programme's ILOs to define them more accurately and ensure that they meet the local, regional and international requirements
- reformulate the mapping from programme level outcomes to course level outcomes, to be more accurate, and to reduce the number of CILOs to make a mapping to the PILOs more manageable
- review the alignment of documented teaching methods to CILOs to ensure that they adequately support the attainment of the course ILOs
- conduct a thorough review of the assessment policies and procedures to take into account the needs and standards of the MBA programme
- review the assessment policies to enhance synergy between formative and summative functions, and improve the mechanisms for providing the students with prompt feedback on their progress.

2.11 Judgment

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme**.

3. 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.

- 3.1 The admission policy is well defined and is available in print and online. The admission requirements for the MBA programme are based on a Bachelor's degree in a related field with a GPA equivalent of at least B-, required minimum subtest scores, a letter of intent, at least three recommendation letters, and certification/s of work experience. During interviews, the Panel learned that the policy is periodically reviewed every three years in light of internal and external review findings. The Panel notes that there is no clear indication in the admission policy about GMAT score requirements, or minimum number of years of work experience required. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the admission policy based on both the regional and international standards for the quality and competitiveness of the programme locally, regionally, and internationally.
- 3.2 In terms of their academic degrees, the profile of admitted students for the MBA programme matches the programme aims. In its interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that applicants with a degree from non-business colleges are required to take a set of pre-MBA courses. However, the Panel notes that the sample profile of admitted students does not indicate the actual job that student holds, only that they are working and the name of their employer. This does not allow the Panel to determine the level of relevant managerial experience that they can draw upon to contribute to classroom learning. The Panel requested sample students CVs, and upon their review, the Panel noted that enrolled students typically occupy specialist or administrative positions in organizations rather than supervisory or managerial ones. The Panel acknowledges the mapping of admission requirements to PEOs and the evaluation of (PEOs) indicating that MBA students are able to achieve a satisfactory rating. However, the Panel is concerned that a relatively high percentage of students are classified as 'inactive' indicating that these students are unable to cope with the demands of the programme. The Panel recommends that the Institution, in its revision of admission policy and related procedures, include appropriate measures to ensure that the admitted students are appropriate for the MBA programme.
- 3.3 The lines of management and accountability are clearly defined in the College's organizational chart and follow a limited 'Line and Staff' hierarchy system. The Programme is managed by the Head of Department who is responsible for the delivery of the MBA programme, and is assisted by Specialization and Course Coordinators. During interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that the Dean oversees the College's main operations to ensure that operational plans of the

College, as implemented by the Associate Deans, are in alignment with the Institution's Strategic Plan. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel demonstrated adequate understanding of the programme's management processes. Evidence of regular meetings was provided to give examples of the deliberations of issues related to the programme management by the Academic Council; the College Council; the Programme Industry Advisory Panel (PIAP); as well as Faculty Meetings. The Panel encourages the Department to clarify the frequency and provision when these meetings are expected to be timetabled, and to include this information in the APPH. Overall, the Panel appreciates that there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the MBA programme.

- 3.4 The available number of faculty members who contribute to the MBA programme is adequate to cover all curriculum areas, because of the small number of postgraduate students currently registered. However, the range of academic qualifications and specializations of the faculty staff is not appropriate for the MBA programme. Upon reviewing provided evidence, the Panel noted that the PhD specializations of some faculty members don't match the courses that they are teaching. The Panel also noted that the majority of the faculty staff who teach in the MBA programme are Assistant Professors, some of which were hired only recently, two to four months ago. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the College has some competitive advantages that can be used to attract qualified high-rank faculty staff, however, the Panel finds that this claim is not reflected in reality, given the current staffing structure. Upon reviewing the Faculty Portfolios provided on site, the Panel had reservations about the institutions which some faculty members obtained their degrees from. Moreover, the Panel noted that several faculty members are involved in teaching multiple courses outside their area of specialization and expertise. The Panel recommends that the Department develop a rigorous mechanism to ensure that academic appointees hold degrees from *bona fide* institutions. The Panel also recommends that the Department ensure that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the discipline which they teach. In its interviews with academic staff, the Panel learned that they are appointed on a two-year contract that can be renewed. The Panel is of the view that this staffing practice compromises the programme's continuity and the accumulation of teaching experience and expertise. This was evidenced during the meetings with many young faculty members who did not show appropriate experience and professional exposure to be able to maintain the quality required in this postgraduate programme. The list of faculty publications indicates that faculty members publish in a range of journals in terms of their quality and that most of the recent papers are published locally. The Panel suggests that the Department encourage publication in externally peer-reviewed journals, through offering financial incentives for active researchers. The Panel also recommends that the Department hire more qualified and higher rank faculty to contribute significantly to the programme.

- 3.5 There are policies and procedures in place for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and retention of faculty members, and these are included in the Faculty Handbook. The Panel explored the implementation of these policies during its interviews with academic and administrative staff. It was apparent to the Panel that the recruitment and induction procedures are implemented as described in the SER and relevant policies. However, the Panel noted that the criteria for the recruitment of faculty members as described in the Faculty Handbook were not always adhered to during the recruitment process, as was evident during interviews and inspection of the provided faculty curriculum vitas. The SER states that a Performance Appraisal System for Teachers (PAST) process takes place for staff at the end of every trimester, and is undertaken by students, peers and superiors. The outcomes of this appraisal are discussed by the Dean with the concerned faculty member. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel confirmed the implementation of this system. The Panel notes that whilst there is a Promotion Policy in place, the number of promotion cases since 2009 is low. The Panel is also concerned that the retention rate of the full-time faculty was lower in the SY 2012-2013, compared to previous years. The Panel recommends that the Department improve the policies and procedures of recruiting, appraising, promoting and retaining the faculty members with effective implementation in practice to guarantee quality in managing and teaching the programme.
- 3.6 AMA-IUB utilizes a computer-based Management Information System (MIS) consisting of two major components i.e. a Campus Information System (CIS) and a Human Resource Management System (HRMS) and other minor components such as e-library. It consists of subsystems such as student admittance, registration, grading, finance, human resource records, class attendance, library resource usage etc. The Panel views the Management Information System to be appropriate for the support of the MBA programme and permits senior management to undertake informed decision making. During the site visit tours, the Panel learned that the MIS is accessed by the various levels in the management hierarchy with identifiable privacy provision to prevent unauthorised access into the various subsystems. The Panel was also informed that the MIS is backed up twice per day and that the information is saved at three different locations, one on site and two at off-site locations. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are able to access minimal but sufficient information concerning their course registration and timetable. The Panel appreciates the appropriate availability, functionality, and suitability of the MIS in place that serve the learning management in the MBA programme.
- 3.7 There are appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the systematic filing and safekeeping of student records. During site visit tours, the Panel learned that in addition to the backing up of the MIS, the admission, registration and student details

(grading, finance etc.) are also duplicated in hard copy and retained in a secure depository for archived records. The Panel was also informed that, to maintain accuracy, when an electronic record is updated, a hardcopy is generated, printed and then added to the hardcopy archive records. In its interviews with IT staff, the Panel learned that an audit trail is in place to ensure accuracy, consistency and to check for attempts at unauthorised access. Corrections to the grades must follow an erratum procedure approved by the Dean, the Registrar and the Internal Auditor. Evidence was provided indicating that the process of data back-up are frequently generated to ensure consistency of security and that physical checks of the security process are frequently undertaken. The Panel notes that a policy concerning a disaster recovery plan is also available and evidence was provided to support the necessary revisions needed to upgrade the plan if/when there are any changes to consider (such as upgrades in information technology). Faculty members interviewed by the Panel were aware of the procedures for ensuring the security of learners' records. The Panel appreciates that appropriate policies and procedures are implemented to ensure the security of student information and accuracy of results in the MBA programme.

- 3.8 AMAIUB has suitable buildings and physical resources including classrooms, computer laboratories, a library, a digital library, internet access, scientific research laboratory, hall equipped with audio/video system, prayer rooms, auditorium, students' lounges as well as facilities for the physically-challenged. During the site visit, the Panel toured the college facilities and found them adequate to carry out the teaching and learning activities for the MBA programme. However, the Panel notes that the library has limited hard copies materials (i.e. books and journals) and e-journal and e-books for the subject matters taught in the MBA programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Department increase the number of print and e-copies of books and journals in the library to support the delivery of MBA courses. Moreover, the Panel is disappointed with the physical accommodation for members of the academic staff, as the majority of offices allocated to the faculty members are not suitable in terms of size, privacy and ventilation. The Panel recommends that the Department significantly improve the physical accommodation for faculty members in order to enhance the efficiency of the MBA programme delivery.
- 3.9 The usage of laboratories and library resources is regularly monitored by the College. The Panel learned during site visit interviews that AMAIUB deploys an electronic tracking system to identify and evaluate room usage. In addition, the library staff are able to monitor and evaluate the usage of the library resources including the e-resources and the loan/return of the physical resources. The Panel was also informed that further IT developments were currently under way to identify individual student usage in the library. In its interviews with IT staff, the

Panel learned that the IT department also tracks the use of the electronic resources and produces usage reports for help with decision making. The Panel acknowledges that periodical statistical reports are produced on the usage of the e-learning system and computer laboratories, and that these reports are disseminated to the management to assist with resource-based decision-making. The Panel finds the tracking system to determine the utilisation of the resources as being appropriate to support the programme.

- 3.10 There are adequate technical and physical resources in place to support the students throughout their studies. During the site visit touring of facilities, the Panel noted that there are 13 IT laboratories in the building which double up as open access computer laboratories when classes are not timetabled in them. An appropriate range of general and specialist software is available to support the requirements of the courses in the programme. In addition, the library contains desktops and Apple iPads to support access into the electronic books and journals and into the library catalogue. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that there is an adequate number of IT technicians to assist them in using IT resources. Specific guidelines to manoeuvre around the library's resources are available to both members of staff and students. The Panel also noted that a virtual learning system is in place ('Moodle') for students to access information relating to their courses and to other supporting information. During interviews, the Panel learned that academic staff are allocated time in their timetable to guide and to meet with students for both academic issues and pastoral care. Counselling sessions are also provided by the Guidance Office. Additionally, there are students who act as student advisors who are able to support the students if/when they are unable to find relevant members of staff. Interviews with students did not raise concerns relating to support of their studies. The Panel appreciates that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support students' learning.
- 3.11 AMA-IUB operates an orientation programme for new students culminating with a tour of the university campus. During site visit interviews, the Panel learned that newly admitted students, whether freshmen or transferees, follow an orientation process that advises them on the operation of the University, including relevant information concerning the academic staff, the services and facilities of the University, the roles and responsibilities of the administrators, as well as university policies and procedures. A Student Handbook is also distributed to provide the students with information on the institution's facilities and services, relevant policies as well as students' rights and responsibilities. Students interviewed by the Panel expressed a general satisfaction of the College's orientation activities. The Panel notes that Activity Reports on Student Orientation are also prepared by the College to evaluate the orientation events and identify areas for improvement. The Panel finds the orientation arrangements to be appropriate for the needs of the students.

- 3.12 The University implements various policies and procedures for tracking the progress of students and for identifying those students at risk and implementing the required intervention. In its interview with academic staff, the Panel learned that each faculty members is required to identify those students who have achieved a mark below 50% in any of the courses and to schedule remedial tutorial classes. Students are allocated to academic advisors whose duties include monitoring the student's progression and a record of administered support is retained in a student advising log. Activity reports on the tutorial classes are used to assist with the decision making process for progression of each 'at risk' student and the Academic Probation Procedure is implemented to ensure that the maximum credits undertaken by students 'at risk' is 15 credits for the following trimester. However, there was no evidence on evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms or the satisfaction of the at-risk students with the support provided. The Panel notes that the Exit Survey Report indicates the need to strengthen the Tutorial Policy of the College to address the needs of students who are academically at risk. The Panel recommends that the Department regularly monitor the implementation of students at risk policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms to ensure that effective academic support is provided to this group of students.
- 3.13 The University provides various activities to expand the MBA students' experiences and knowledge through informal learning. During interviews with students, the Panel learned that opportunities are available for them to engage in informal activities such as in-house seminars, training, conferences, career days, car shows, charity fund raising events, Open Day festivals as well as through a variety of competitions. These activities are co-ordinated by the Office of Student Affairs, the University Student Council and the College Council. However, the Panel notes that the venues for student informal learning activities are limited particularly that the facilities used for informal activities, such as the university auditorium, are also used for formal teaching purposes. The Panel encourages the Department to expand its current facilities for informal learning in order to enhance the students' learning experience.
- 3.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the MBA programme.
 - An effective Management Information System is in place and supports the learning management in the programme.
 - Appropriate policies and procedures are implemented to ensure the security of students' records.
 - Appropriate mechanisms are in place to support the students' formal learning experience.

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

- revise the admission policy based on adequate academic standards, for the purpose of quality and competitiveness locally, regionally, and internationally
- implement effective mechanisms to ensure that the admitted students are appropriate for the MBA programme
- develop a rigorous mechanism to ensure that academic appointees, both full-time and part-time, hold degrees from *bona fide* institutions
- ensure that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the discipline which they teach
- recruit more qualified and higher rank faculty to contribute significantly to the MBA programme
- improve the policies and procedures of recruiting, appraising, promoting and retaining the faculty members with effective implementation in practice to guarantee quality in managing and teaching the programme
- enhance the library provision of textbooks, journals, e-journal and e-books for the subject matters taught in the MBA programme .
- significantly improve the physical accommodation for academic staff
- regularly monitor the implementation of students at risk policies and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms to ensure that effective academic support is provided to this group of students.

3.17 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme**.

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The graduate attributes of the MBA programme are stated as a set of Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) which while explicitly stated, are very general. Direct and indirect assessment methods are employed to determine the achievement of these attributes by graduates. The Panel acknowledges that there is a mapping of PILOs to the PEOs and CILOs. However, the Panel is of the view that the graduate attributes at the point of exit from the programme need to be specifically stated. The Panel recommends that the Department review the graduate attributes to ensure that they are specific, applicable, and that they are effectively integrated into the programme design.
- 4.2 The College acknowledges the importance of benchmarking and there is a university policy on benchmarking. However, the Panel notes that thus far, only an informal benchmarking exercise has been undertaken for the MBA programme. Moreover, the regional and international institutions of MBA programmes against which the informal benchmarks were conducted are limited to in terms of their institutional characteristics and geographical location. During interviews, senior staff acknowledged that they need to engage in formal benchmarking activities in future. The Panel concurs and recommends that Department conduct formal and regular benchmarking to evaluate the MBA programme's academic standards against similar local, regional, and international programmes.
- 4.3 AMA-IUB has a suite of policies and procedures for the assessment and monitoring of teaching and learning ; however, as indicated earlier, these policies do not provide for differentiated procedures that take into account the needs and level of the MBA programme. According to the SER, the assessment policies are consistently implemented and the monitoring of the policies and procedures occurs at College and Institution levels. However, the Panel is of the view that there are gaps in the implementation of these policies. This was evident to the Panel from the review of student assessment, in the way that assessment tasks are set, the awarding of very high marks, and the limited marks/grade distribution range. The Panel is also concerned that main focus of assessment methods was to assess knowledge and understanding, rather than by critical thinking and analysis in almost all cases of essay questions. The Panel views the lack of critical thinking and analysis in students' work to be of concern and in need of urgent attention by the Department (see section 4.4, 4.7). The Panel recommends that the Department, implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure the consistent implementation of these policies

and procedures in practice.

- 4.4 According to the SER, the CILO Assessment Plan provides a clear assessment mechanism at course level to ensure the alignment of assessment with course learning outcomes. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the examinations for each course are based upon a Table of Specifications (TOS) that includes mapping between the assessment topics, the related questions, the assessed ILOs and to Bloom's Taxonomy. The Panel finds that this framework should provide a mechanism to emphasize the relevance of, and focus on, higher order cognitive skills in the MBA. However, upon examining samples of assessed students' work, the Panel noted these are not consistently applied in the design of assessment tasks. For example, in some examinations, 'evaluation' – the highest cognitive skill on Bloom's taxonomy - is not even assessed (e.g. Business Policy 2012-2013 finals). In the case of the 'Leadership and Organizational Behavior' examination, only five marks are allocated to 'evaluation; and the question is 'How effective is communication in a digital age?'. The answer key suggests this is adequately addressed if the student recognizes the impact of the digital age in the workplace in the form of social networking, computerization and electronic communication. The Panel finds that this is not an adequate assessment of 'evaluation'. The Panel recommends that the Department improve the current mechanisms for the alignment of assessment with the learning outcomes, and ensure that they are implemented in practice.
- 4.5 A Moderation of Assessment Policy is implemented by the Department to ensure the adequacy and accuracy of the assessment criteria and grading system at a course level. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that internal moderators and double markers are assigned for all the courses offered in the programme. The role of the internal moderator is to report on whether the assessment criteria have been consistently applied and whether the mark awarded is appropriate. Moderation Assessment Reports are prepared by the moderators and submitted to the Programme/Department Head. The effectiveness of the internal programme moderation mechanisms is overseen by the College's CQI committee whose duties include verifying the implementation of internal moderation and providing a report to the College. The Panel notes that faculty members are aware of the internal moderation mechanisms and are routinely carrying out internal moderation duties. The Panel reviewed evidence of internal moderation in a sample of students' work provided on site and noted that internal moderation procedures are carried out fairly and consistently. The Panel appreciates that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the internal programme moderation.
- 4.6 There are procedures in place for the external moderation of assessment. The role of course external examiners is to examine and comment on the appropriateness of assessment, course content and learning outcomes and ensure that assessments are

consistent and fair. Upon reviewing the provided External Examiners Reports, the Panel noted that they were lacking in analysis and did not represent a critical review of the assessments. Moreover, according to one of the examiner's report, the number of portfolios of student work provided was insufficient to reach a conclusion on 'Assuring the validity and reliability of the assessed work' and 'Ensuring that student outputs are appropriate to their level and are comparable to the output of students in similar programs in Bahrain and other countries'. The external examiner recommended that the Institution provide a well-organized portfolio with more evidence of students' marked work and moderated marking to support the validity, accuracy and reliability of assessed work. The Panel considers this oversight to be an important issue and recommends that the Department provide all external examiners with a representative sample of students' assessed work, at each relevant examination period in order for the examiners to assess the standard of students' work and consistency and fairness of internal assessment procedures.

- 4.7 The Panel was provided with a sample of assessed students' summative work, including examinations, case studies and theses. Upon examining the provided evidence, the Panel noted that the level of students' achievement is below that which is expected in an MBA programme. In the view of the Panel, this is in part due to the basic level of design of assessment tasks as illustrated above (see 4.4), combined with lenient marking. As a result, students do not have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their level of achievement. For example, in most examinations, evaluation and critical thinking are not even assessed. The Panel views the lack of critical thinking and analysis in students' work to be of concern and in need of urgent attention by the Department. The Panel notes that case studies are incorporated in some of the examinations, but are typically short and illustrative, rather than being more complex in nature. The questions posed for these case studies are also at a basic level. The Panel is concerned that there is little evidence of critical engagement with the literature, and sources are seldom cited or listed. In assessing the students' analysis of case studies, typically 20% of the mark is allocated to presentation, 40% to accuracy of work and only 40% to analysis and synthesis. Furthermore, very high marks are typically awarded on all criteria, with total marks above 90%. The Panel finds that the level of students' achievement is, by and large, below the required standard at local, regional and international levels. The Panel recommends that the Department thoroughly review and revise its approach to the setting of assessments to ensure that the assessments in practice are of the appropriate level to meet international standards for MBA programmes.
- 4.8 The Panel reviewed samples of the assessed theses provided, and noted that their level is below what is expected in similar regional and international MBA programmes. The Panel is of the view that a more comprehensive and critical review of the literature is required and more attention needs to be given to research

methodology in terms of sampling, data analysis, and hypotheses testing. Furthermore, the students seem to have developed a limited appreciation of research, given that the typical method of data collection is a questionnaire. Even in utilizing questionnaires more guidance is needed to ensure these are reliable and valid. From interviews with students and graduates, the Panel noted that they had little exposure to the use of qualitative approaches to research and that data is often only analyzed at a descriptive level. The Panel recommends that the Department expose students to a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and encourage the use of mixed method research design to more effectively address research problems. The SER states that the results of PEOs and PILOs evaluation as well as the CGPA show that the students and graduates meet the programme aims and intended learning outcomes. However, the Panel notes that, while the assessment policy prescribes a competence based approach to assessment, more recently a norms/quota based approach has been applied. Typically the performance standard for this norm in the MBA, is an 80% pass rate. This is far higher than those set for some of the Bachelor's level courses. The Panel finds that this practice has compromised the quality of assessment in the MBA programme and eroded the application of competence based assessment in assessments. This is evident in the way that assessment tasks are set, the awarding of very high marks, and the limited marks/grade distribution range. Even in thesis marking, the typical mark awarded is in the region of 70 to 90%. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the setting and implementation of competence-based assessment to ensure that the assessments in practice are of the appropriate level to meet international standards for MBA programmes. Moreover, while the Panel acknowledges the efforts of the Department in conducting Exit, Alumni and Employer surveys, and the use of results in evaluating the level of achievement of graduates, the Panel is of the view that these surveys need to be redesigned in terms of their question wording and the scales used and when administered, an adequate sample of the target respondents must be ensured (see section 5.8).

- 4.9 The last intake for the MBA programme was in the 2010-2011 academic year, with an enrolment of 145 students. This programme should typically be completed within two years. While graduation rates of 13% were reported for 2011 and 40% in 2012, a further 11.64% are currently enrolled students and 35% are inactive students. This suggests nearly half of the students have not yet completed the degree, with the majority of these not currently registered. Timetables for the current academic year reflect particular times being allocated to the MBA programme, but only one student is enrolled for each of the 'Financial Management', 'Leadership and Organizational Behaviour', 'Methods of Research with Business Application', and 'Labour and Employment Law' courses, and 11 for the 'Research Writing'. In addition, the Panel was informed in interviews that among the 15 currently registered students, four are returning with outstanding courses and are receiving

instruction; however, since the class size is below ten, this is not counted as part of the lecturer's allocated teaching load in terms of the College's practice. From interviews with the senior management and faculty members, it was evident to the Panel that there is no policy in place to actively manage these in-active students. The Panel is of the view that the inactive students on the programme need to be actively managed and re-registered as soon as possible, or excluded. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement policies and procedures to address the 'inactive' students issue in order to improve the efficiency of the MBA programme and its academic standards.

- 4.10 The SER states that policies and procedures to monitor the supervision of student research are in place and are consistently implemented and reviewed. However, upon examining the provided theses, the Panel finds that these are not satisfactory in several aspects, including the research structure and methodology. During interviews with students and faculty members, the Panel noted that insufficient time is made available in the programme for supervisors to guide students and provide them with detailed written feedback so that they can produce quality work. Samples of supervision forms designed for students to report on the progress made with the thesis writing were provided on site. The Panel notes that while there is a column to report problems, not much information is written here, and comments are related to the research itself. Furthermore, the Panel found no evidence of students being required to submit information on the level of satisfaction that they have with their supervisor. Furthermore, there is no evidence of publishing papers from the approved theses, even in local journals. The Panel recommends that Department require supervisors to give more guidance to students, including providing them with more detailed written feedback and encourage them to publish papers jointly with their students. The Panel also encourages the Department to provide students with a mechanism to report on the level of satisfaction that they are experiencing with research supervision received. The Panel acknowledges that the membership of theses examiners panel indicate a balance of academics and practitioners suggesting that both academic and applied contributions of the work are considered. However, the Panel is of the view that the senior management should give more emphasis on the objectivity, qualification, and professionalism of both the internal and external examiners of students' theses. The Panel recommends that the Department review the Research Guidelines to improve the supervision mechanisms and ensure that the quality of the submitted theses and their assessment are at the level of international MBA programmes.
- 4.11 The MBA programme has a Programme Industry Advisory Panel (PIAP) composed of three members with appropriate professional and industrial backgrounds who provide advice on all key issues relating to the programme. In its interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the PIAP is a more recent

development and is viewed as being in its early stages of development. The Panel notes that, while PIAP has only three members, they are very active and have direct engagement with faculty. During interviews, PIAP members informed the Panel that the College is responsive to their advice, with recommendations taken into consideration and are acted upon. Evidence of the implementation of PIAP recommendations in the MBA programme was provided to the Panel. The Panel appreciates that there is an active advisory panel in the MBA programme and encourages the Department to provide them with vital information to assist them in making informed decisions leading to the improvement of the MBA programme.

- 4.12 A survey conducted in August 2013 among 20 employers included an assessment of experiences of the employers with MBA graduates in terms of quality of work and productivity, work attitude, commitment and compliance to company rules. Results indicated high levels of satisfaction. An assessment of the PEOs was, however, omitted. The three employers interviewed during the site visit were satisfied with the quality of graduates produced, but have not employed a large proportion of the graduates. Graduates interviewed provided evidence of career mobility after having achieved their qualification. A periodic MBA alumni satisfaction survey is conducted with a particular cohort of graduates. This represents a once-off assessment and reports indicate a reasonable response rate amongst graduates. Graduates are tracked in terms of the industry that they are employed in and their personal satisfaction with the attainment of the PEOs. However, no information is provided on the level of employment or their mobility. Alumni surveys also do not collect information about the position or job title of the alumnus. This indicates a deficiency in the gathering of critical graduate information, in that there is not a regular and systematic tracking of graduates in terms of their career progress and mobility. The Panel encourages the Department to view maintaining relationships with MBA alumni as a strategic goal of the College and arrange regular and relevant events for alumni. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement effective mechanisms to actively track the destination and performance of graduate cohorts more regularly and in a manner that allows a comparison to graduates of other programmes.
- 4.13 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- Appropriate mechanisms are in place for the internal moderation of assessment.
 - There is an active Programme Industry Advisory Panel and the College is responsive to their advice.
- 4.15 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- review the graduate attributes to ensure that they are specific, applicable, express what the students would have accomplished at the time of their graduation a
- conduct formal and regular benchmarking exercises to evaluate the programme's academic standards against similar local, regional and international programmes
- implement effective mechanisms to ensure the consistent implementation of the programme's assessment policies and procedures
- improve the current mechanisms for the alignment of assessment with course learning outcomes and ensure that they are implemented in practice
- provide larger samples of portfolios of student work to external examiners so that they can more effectively compare the standards of this programme to other programmes.
- revise its approach to the setting of assessments to ensure that the assessments in practice are at the appropriate level to meet international standards for MBA programmes
- expose students to a wide range of both quantitative and qualitative approaches to research and encourage the use of mixed method research design to more effectively address research problems.
- apply competence-based assessment in practice and stop the practice of setting performance standards for pass rates, to ensure the academic standards of the programme
- develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures to effectively manage 'inactive students'
- require supervisors to give more guidance to students, including providing them with more detailed written feedback and encourage them to publish papers jointly with their students
- review the Research Guidelines to improve the supervision mechanisms and ensure that the quality of the submitted theses and their assessment meet international standards
- develop and implement effective mechanisms to actively track the destination and performance of graduate cohorts more regularly and in a manner that allows a comparison to graduates of other programmes.

Judgement

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

5. 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.

- 5.1 The Institution has prepared documentation of the policies and procedures such as Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook, Faculty Manual, Student Handbook, Library Guide, Standing Committee Guidelines, Practicum Handbook, Guidelines for Notional Hours, Data Backup and Restoration, Survey Manual and AMAIUB Operations Manual. The Panel appreciates the detailed procedures in these documents such as the moderation of assessment. However, the Panel notes that some of the policies do not provide clear and specific information such as minimum CGPA for graduation as well as the maximum number of years needed to complete their studies. The Faculty Handbook lacked explicit information regarding the faculty development initiatives, and relevant-research form. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook to provide detailed explanations of procedures to assist in uniform decision making. The Panel noted from different interviews and from evidence that the Institution's policies were not always adhered to by staff members. For example, informal benchmarking was conducted against universities that do not fulfil the criteria specified in the Handbook. Moreover, the criteria for the recruitment of faculty was not always adhered to, as evident from provided curriculum vitas. The Panel recommends that the Department ensure adherence to criteria set by the institution in implementing policies and procedures to maximize their effectiveness. The Panel noted during interviews that some support staff members were unclear on some of these policies or had no access to such documents. Furthermore, it was revealed that students were not familiar with most of the procedures in the institution and were depending on word of mouth for dissemination of updates on matters related to their studies. The Panel recommends that the Department enhance the existing mechanisms for the dissemination of the Institution's policies to all stakeholders and ensure their consistent implementation.
- 5.2 Structures are in place to ensure that effective and responsible leadership takes place at various levels in the College. However, when interviewing the programme's senior management, the Panel was concerned about the dismissal of the issues being raised by the Panel, and the glossing over of the problems facing the programme. In view of the Panel, this lack of critique – which was also evident in the SER - reflected a lack of responsibility for ensuring the quality of the MBA programme. The Panel is of the view that the College needs to place more emphasis on the academic

leadership of the MBA programme, and recommends the appointment of a highly qualified full-professor who can exercise academic leadership and who adopts a more critical stance towards the application of quality assurance procedures to the MBA programme, to ensure that the standards of the MBA are raised and a quality programme offered. According to the SER, the College is guided by its College Development Plan which is anchored on the Institution's strategic plan. During interviews, the Panel noted that whilst faculty members are aware of the mission of the AMAUB, and aims of the MBA programme; they are not fully briefed on the AMAUB's strategic plan and its implications for the programme. Moreover, notwithstanding that the majority of the teaching faculty are at the level of Assistant Professors, it was evident to the Panel that they are not effectively mentored and that they are operating on the execution level only. Whilst the Panel appreciates the clear lines of authority within the programme and College, the Panel is of the view that the faculty's contribution to the leadership of the MBA programme and the College is in need of enhancement. The Panel recommends that the Department implement appropriate mechanisms for the development of sustainable leadership in the programme.

- 5.3 According to the SER, AMAIUB has a well-documented Quality Management System (QMS) in place which is applied to all programmes through a programme review cycle. The Panel was provided with documentation on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the QMS by the College Quality Improvement Committee. Whilst the Panel appreciates the proper documentation of the quality assurance system and its management processes, upon reviewing onsite evidence such as course files, the Panel noted that the implementation and the monitoring of the effectiveness of these quality assurance procedures was not always reflected in the overall activities of the institution. For example, with regard to student assessment, the Panel noted that the implementation of a sound assessment was not adhered to by all faculty involved. In addition, the Panel has concerns related to some of the procedures implemented in quality assurance activities. For example, the Sample CQI Report on entitled IQA Report on Midterm Exam provided to the Panel utilizes a three-point scale that could be misleading, particularly when describing the criteria of 'Good' as 'Correct elements have been applied some of the time'. The Panel is of the view that this criteria should be labeled as 'Inconsistent' as reflected in its description. Reading these reports therefore gives a false impression as it masks what could be numerous inconsistencies or problems in quality. The Panel encourages the Department to embrace quality assurance as a mechanism to substantially enhance the quality of programmes, rather than simply seeing it as a compliance requirement that has to be met. Embracing the true spirit of quality assurance would be evident in for example, more critical self-assessments and data gathering. The Panel recommends that the College improve the current mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the quality assurance system to ensure its

effectiveness.

- 5.4 Formal policies, procedures and reporting mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff understand their quality assurance roles. They are trained for this role through workshops conducted on an ongoing basis. During interviews, the Panel noted that faculty members are knowledgeable about the policies, structures and procedures to be followed for quality assurance. This understanding was reflected in the design of course-related documentation, but was not effectively applied to establish an appropriate MBA quality standard or level. Junior support staff interviewed by the Panel had little awareness of quality management and assurance and its implications for their work. The Panel recommends that the Department provide more orientation and in-house training courses for the supporting staff to develop their skills and awareness of the internal system of quality assurance management, as well as to improve their administrative skills. In addition, after examination of some job descriptions provided as evidence, there was a clear absence of emphasis on quality assurance in them. The Panel suggests that the Department revise job descriptions of both academic and support staff to include quality assurance as one of their responsibilities.
- 5.5 The AMAIUB Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook clearly sets out the procedure for the introduction of new programmes. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel learned that the procedure for programme development is initiated by the College Curriculum Review Committee in response to feedback received from stakeholders and environment scanning. The proposal is then forwarded to the Dean and the Academic Council, after which it is finally approved by the Curriculum Oversight Committee. Evidence of the implementation of these procedures by the College in the development of the Bachelor of Hospitality Management was provided to the Panel. The Panel finds these procedures fit for the purpose for which they were developed. However, the Panel notes that the environment scanning depends on Tamkeen reports and feedback received from the PIAP as the main sources of input for such decisions. The Panel encourages the College to refer to other diversified sources of data in order to support the development of programmes that are relevant to the local market needs.
- 5.6 The College follows an annual internal auditing cycle in the form of the preparation of a Self Evaluation Survey (SES) which pinpoints weaknesses and areas for improvement and further investigation. The implementation of the recommendations in the SES by the College is monitored by the QAAO. During interviews, the Panel learned that, on individual course level, course coordinators prepare review reports on their respective courses and submit them to the Head of Department who, in turn, present it after discussion with the course coordinator to the Curriculum Review Committee for proposal preparation. A sample report of the

curriculum review committee was provided to the Panel. The Panel noted again that there was no specific date for the implementation of the proposed changes. The Panel recommends that the Department ensures the addition of a timeline to the SES to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of corrective action planned.

- 5.7 Policies and procedures for the periodic review of programmes are in place. The Department utilizes internal feedback from the standing committees such as Curriculum Review Committee, as well as external feedback from the PIAP and external examiners. During interviews, the Panel learned that feedback from both internal and external stakeholders is consolidated in a Curriculum Review Report which is forwarded to the college Dean for review and subsequent presentation to the Academic Council. Upon reviewing the provided External Examiners Reports, the Panel noted that they were lacking in analysis and did not represent a critical review. The Panel recommends that the Department ensures the appointment of appropriate external examiners for the review of its programme and courses. In its interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that the MBA programme has been reviewed recently as part of a three-year revision cycle, culminating in the development of a new curriculum. The Panel notes that the new curriculum is substantially different from the previous one, however, it is still to be implemented. From interviews and evidence provided, the Panel concluded that the outcome of reviews is mainly reflected in changes made to the curriculum. The Panel is concerned that, despite internal and external reviews, some of the weaknesses in the programme delivery, e.g. the pro-active management of inactive students have not been identified and remedied. Accordingly, the Panel is of the view that the periodic review of the programme is not effectively utilized by the Department. The Panel recommends that the Department improve the current mechanisms for the internal and external review of the programme to ensure the effective implementation of the Institution's Programme Review policies.
- 5.8 Procedures for the collection and analysis of stakeholders' feedback and recommendations are stated in the Institution's Survey Manual. The Panel finds these procedures to be appropriate. The College has conducted a number of surveys to seek stakeholders' feedback; these include Alumni Survey, Employer Survey, as well as Student and Staff Satisfaction Surveys. Upon reviewing provided evidence, the Panel was concerned about the validity of some of the questions in these surveys. For example, the validity of the questions contained in the Employee Satisfaction Survey Instrument are reminiscent of an employee survey for an employer, and does not ultimately reflect the role of the College or MBA programme. They do not appear to be a valid measure. The Panel recommends that the Department re-design the stakeholders surveys in terms of their question wording and the scales used, and to ensure that an adequate sample of the target respondents are surveyed. During interviews the Panel learned that, in addition to surveys, feedback from practicum

employers and PIAP members is collected and evaluated. Evidence was provided for the implementation of PIAP recommendations, such as the increase of the Practicum hours from 120 to 240 which was introduced in the new curriculum. The SER states that the survey analysis results are posted on the Institution's bulletin boards and discussed with stakeholders during meetings. However during interviews with internal and external stakeholders, the Panel noted the lack of transparency in the dissemination of the results of the feedback received from the stakeholders. The Panel recommends that the Department enhance the current mechanisms for the dissemination of survey results to make the outcome of the surveys available to all constituents.

- 5.9 Strategies for staff professional development are outlined in the Faculty Development Plan (FDP) and are well known by faculty members as evident from site visit interviews. In addition, Individual Faculty Development Plans (IFDPs) are undertaken based upon the requests of faculty member and/or decisions or by management to ensure the alignment of development activities with the programme requirements. During interviews, the Panel was informed that a bottom-up process is followed in identifying the professional development needs of faculty to collate a College-level development plan. IFDPs are submitted by faculty members to the Head of Department who, in turn, forwards a report on these requests to the college Dean. A college Faculty Development Plan is prepared by the Dean and is subsequently monitored and results are summarized in an Accomplishment Report. The Panel notes that the Faculty Development Plan does not explicitly indicate how this plan and its objectives are aligned with the AMAIUB Strategic Plan. Moreover, faculty members interviewed by the Panel had no knowledge of how their IFDP are linked to the achievement of the Institution's strategic goals. The Panel is of the view that the bottom-up process of formulating an academic staff development plan needs to be integrated with a top-down strategic approach to staff development. Upon reviewing the list of Faculty Development Activities, the Panel noted that the majority of the professional development activities were limited to the attendance of in-house and local quality assurance workshops. Furthermore, there was no evidence that professional development is provided for administrative staff members. The Panel recommends that the Department improve the existing mechanisms for the staff professional development to ensure that both academic and administrative staff are provided with sufficient and appropriate opportunities in line with their qualifications, discipline expertise and according to the needs of the University and the achievement of its strategic goals.
- 5.10 According to the SER, the Department relies on its advisory panel, and available published market studies, such as Tamkeen Future Skills Strategy, for scoping the labour market. During interviews, the Panel learned PIAP members provide the Department with recommendations on enhancing the curriculum and the relevancy

of the programme. However, there was no evidence of specific primary data collected for the purpose of scoping the labour market and ensuring the programme is up to date. This was confirmed in site visit interviews with faculty members. The Panel recommends that the Department conduct targeted market studies in order to gauge the latest trends and ensure the MBA programme meets market needs.

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

- The quality assurance management system is well-documented.
- Procedures for the development of new programmes are fit for the purpose for which they were developed.
- Appropriate mechanisms are implemented for collecting stakeholders feedback.

5.12 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- revise the Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook to provide detailed explanations of procedures to assist in uniform decision making
- ensure adherence to criteria set by the institution in implementing policies and procedures to ensure their effectiveness
- enhance existing mechanism for the dissemination of the institution's policies to all stakeholders
- appoint a highly qualified full-professor who can exercise academic leadership and who adopts a more critical stance towards the application of quality assurance procedures to the MBA programme, to ensure that the standards of the MBA are raised and a quality programme offered.
- implement appropriate mechanisms for the development of sustainable leadership in the programme
- improve the current mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the quality assurance system to ensure its effectiveness
- improve information dissemination mechanisms among all staff (both academic and administrative) including the part time faculty members as well as the students regarding quality assurance and their role in the process
- ensure the addition of a timeline to the Self Evaluation Survey to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of corrective action planned
- ensure the appointment of appropriate external examiners for the review of the programme
- improve the current mechanisms for the internal and external review of the programme
- re-design the stakeholders surveys in terms of their question wording and the scales used, and to ensure that an adequate sample of the target respondents

- are surveyed
- enhance the current mechanisms for the dissemination of survey results to make the outcome of the surveys available to all constituents
- improve the existing mechanisms for the staff professional development to ensure that all staff, including junior and administrative staff, are provided with sufficient and appropriate opportunities in line with the Institution's strategic plan
- conduct targeted market studies in order to gauge the latest trends and ensure that the MBA programme meets market needs

5.13 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**.

6 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/QQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

There is no confidence in the Master in Business Administration of the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences offered by AMA International University - Bahrain.