



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

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

## **Programme Follow-Up Visit Report**

**Bachelor of Science in International Studies  
College of Administrative and Financial Sciences  
AMA International University - Bahrain  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**First Follow-up Visit Date: 28-29 November 2016**

**Review Date: 7-9 April 2014**

HC028-C2-F006

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## The Programme Follow-up Visit Overview

The follow-up visit for academic programmes conducted by the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) in the Kingdom of Bahrain is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance review, reporting and improvement.

The follow-up visit applies to all programmes that have been reviewed using the Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework, and received a judgement of 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence'.

This Report provided an account of the follow-up process and the findings of the follow-up panel (the Panel), whereby the Bachelor of Science in International Studies (BSIS), at AMA International University - Bahrain (AMAIUB) operating in the Kingdom of Bahrain was revisited on 28 September 2016 to assess its progress, in line with the published Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework and the BQA regulations.

### A. Aims of the Follow-up Visit

- (i) Assess the progress made against the recommendations highlighted in the review report (in accordance with the four BQA Indicators) of AMAIUB's BSIS since the programme was reviewed on 7-9 April 2014.
- (ii) Provide further information and support for the continuous improvement of academic standards and quality enhancement of higher education provision, specifically within the BSIS programme at AMAIUB, and for higher education provision within the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a whole.

### B. Background

The review of the BSIS programme, at AMAIUB in the Kingdom of Bahrain was conducted by the DHR of the BQA on 7-9 April 2014.

The overall judgement of the review panel for the BSIS programme, of AMAIUB was that of '**No confidence**'. Consequently, the follow-up process incorporated the review of the evidence presented by AMAIUB to the DHR, the improvement plan, the progress report and its supporting materials, and the documents submitted during the follow-up visit and those extracted from the interview sessions.

The external review panel's judgement on the AMAIUB's BSIS programme for each Indicator was as follows:

**Indicator 1:** The learning programme; **'not satisfied'**

**Indicator 2:** Efficiency of the programme; **'not satisfied'**

**Indicator 3:** Academic standards of the graduates; **'not satisfied'**

**Indicator 4:** Effectiveness of quality management and assurance **'not satisfied'**

The follow-up visit was conducted by a panel consisting of two members. This follow-up visit focused on assessing how the institution addressed the recommendations of the report of the review conducted on 7-9 April 2014. For each recommendation given under the four Indicators, the Panel judged whether the recommendation is 'fully addressed', 'partially addressed', or 'not addressed' using the rubric in Appendix 1. An overall judgement of 'good progress', 'adequate progress' or 'inadequate progress' is given based on the rubric provided in Appendix 2.

### **C. Overview of the Bachelor of Science in International Studies**

The BSIS programme is one of the programmes that were approved by the Ministry of Education when AMAIUB started operating in 2002. Since 2013, there has been 659 BSIS graduates. Currently the programme has been revised and a proposal has been sent to the Higher Education Council (HEC) to change the qualification title to Bachelor of Science in International Business, in line with the introduced changes to the curriculum and syllabi emphasis. As stated in the progress report, there were 207 students enrolled in the newly revised programme in the academic year 2015-2016, with six full-time and two part-time academic staff contributing to the delivery of the programme. Nonetheless, until the time of the follow-up visit, the institution was still awaiting the HEC's approval for the revised curriculum and the new title of the qualification.

## 1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BSIS programme of AMAIUB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of April 2014, under Indicator 1: The learning programme; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 1.1:** *Review and revise the Programme aims to ensure alignment with international benchmarks and norms for International Studies Programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The College of Administrative and Financial Sciences addressed this recommendation using two main approaches. Firstly, by changing the title of the programme from 'Bachelor of Science in International Studies' (BSIS) to 'Bachelor of Science in International Business' (BSIB), and secondly by amending the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) to ensure the alignment of the programme objectives with the proposed bachelor degree in International Business. These PEOs, which are used interchangeably as the programme aims, are mapped to the university's mission. The Panel is of the view that the aims of the proposed bachelor degree in International Business, as expressed by the PEOs, are aligned with international benchmarks and norms for an undergraduate programme in International Business and align with the institution's mission. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that faculty members have been actively involved in bringing about the proposed changes in the BSIS programme. Interviewed programme team indicated that the proposed change of programme's title to BSIB gives a much better focus and identity to the programme. Moreover, it was evident that they are aware of the college's formal procedures and associated activities for the change of the title of a programme and a programmes' educational objectives. The Panel also noted that a benchmarking exercise with three regional and international universities and the UK subject benchmark statements, has been carried out by the Curriculum Review Committee (CRC). Meeting with students and members of the Programme Industry Advisory Panel (PIAP), the Panel confirmed that these stakeholders strongly support the proposed change of the title of the qualification from BSIS to BSIB. During the follow-up visit, the Panel came to know that a formal request for the proposed change of the qualification's title was made to the HEC on 9 February 2016, however, approval for this change has not yet been received. The Panel is concerned that the College is currently running this programme with the new curriculum, despite the absence of a formal approval from the HEC, which students are not formally aware of. Although, interviewed senior faculty member indicated their full confidence that the proposed changes will soon be formally approved by the HEC, the Panel recommends that the College in conjunction

with the University, expedite the process of attaining HEC's approval before they subject the students to changes that are not formally approved.

**Recommendation 1.2:** *Urgently review and revise the curriculum, its content and focus, to address the disjuncture between the curriculum content and the title of the Award of the Programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially addressed*

In addressing this recommendation, the College responded by putting into place two mechanisms. Firstly, a consultation process involving its key stakeholders and secondly a benchmarking exercise, which was performed by the CRC. In this benchmarking exercise, CRC carried out a comparison of the original BSIS curriculum with three bachelor programmes in International Business, in order to revise and align the curriculum to fit the proposal of having the programme lead to a bachelor degree in International Business. During interview sessions, the Panel learnt that the outcomes of these benchmarking exercises guided the decision to change the title of the programme rather than the curriculum as the CRC recommended that only minor adjustments to the BSIS curriculum is needed in order to align it to the requirements of a bachelor degree in International Business. As a result, the proposed BSIB curriculum is very similar in its structure and content to that of the original BSIS programme that it aims to replace. The only innovation in this curriculum revision and alignment exercise is the replacement of five courses from the BSIS curriculum with five new courses, covering topics on management, financial accounting, and quantitative methods. The Panel studied the proposed BSIB curriculum and notes that it is comprehensive and wide in scope. The curriculum is organised on the basis of 180 credit units divided into 60 courses of three credit units each, delivered on a Trimester basis, each consisting of 18 credits (which is the maximum allowed credits units), and is expected to be completed over a four-year period, as indicated by the study plan. In order to establish where the focus of the revised curriculum lies, given its wide scope, the Panel asked for an explanation of its core content and focus. During interviews, the programme team pointed out that the proposed curriculum contains many short courses on various aspects of International Business and these courses are taught throughout the duration of the programme. The Panel studied the list of core courses provided on site. According to these documents, the core of the proposed BSIB curriculum is based on 27 courses, covering various aspects of business, finance, and management, in addition to the 'International Business Internship' course, which is allocated six credits. The Panel, however, notes that the proposed 'core courses' lack relevant mechanisms to clearly show synergy and interconnections between the core courses and various clusters of courses, in addition there is a lack of a clear focus on progression in International Business as a free standing course, in its own right, on a year-on year basis. Furthermore, the Panel noted that there appears to be no logical

explanation and coherent organisation for inclusion and arrangement of these short courses into the 'core' of the proposed curriculum. During interviews, faculty and CRC members explained the structure of the proposed curriculum in International Business and confirmed that its core is organised in a form of a number of clusters, each containing a number of short courses on various aspects of International Business on a year-on-year basis. The Panel found these explanations to be useful and consistent with the documented proposed structure, however, the Panel is of the opinion that for an Award of a bachelor of science degree in 'International Business' there needs to be stronger linkages between various clusters and a clear synergy between core courses throughout the proposed curriculum. Furthermore, there is a need for a clear focus on 'International Business' as a free standing core course in levels 2 and 3, to ensure the required depth and progression in International Business theory and practice on a year-on-year basis. In assessing the progress of the College against this recommendation, the Panel concludes that the College has put in place relevant procedures and mechanisms for the revision of the BSIS curriculum. However, the proposed minor adjustments to the BSIS curriculum are not sufficient to fully align this curriculum to fit the proposed programme's title and the Award in International Business, and accordingly, recommends more focused work in this area.

**Recommendation 1.3:** *Embed the balance between theory and practice in the new curriculum.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The progress report submitted by the College states that the revised curriculum and its syllabi provide a balance between theory and practice. During interview sessions, the Panel noted that faculty members are aware of the importance of establishing a good balance between theory and practice within the framework of the proposed curriculum for the BSIB programme. Interviewed faculty members informed the Panel that this is achieved by imbedding this in the curriculum design and adopting appropriate teaching and learning strategies. They indicated that the International Business courses included in the programme ensure that students will acquire a comprehensive perspective and understanding of the International Business field, whilst writing a thesis and research papers on multinational companies would provide an avenue for these students to implement the theories they learn. While the Panel considers these mechanisms to be relevant and appropriate, the Panel finds the core of the proposed curriculum in need of strengthening to include a free-standing course in 'International Business' at levels 2 and 3 to ensure progression and a better balance in theory and practice of International Business within the framework of the proposed curriculum. The Panel acknowledges that the College has made some progress in this key area and recommends that the College should further enhance the

programme through the design of the core courses of the proposed curriculum to ensure there is a balance between theory and practice.

**Recommendation 1.4:** *Review and revise the PILOs to ensure that they are consistent with PILOs of similar regional and international programmes in International Studies.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

To address this recommendation, the programme team conducted a full revision of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and developed a new set of PILOs that are aligned with the proposed BSIB programme and its aims. In revising the PILOs, the College has consulted key stakeholders and has utilised relevant results of the benchmarking exercise with similar programmes offered by regional and international institutions. During interview sessions, faculty members and members of the PIAP confirmed that they have been actively involved in the process of revising PILOs. Faculty members indicated that QAA-UK subject specifications were also utilised to ensure the suitability of the proposed PILOs. The Panel studied the revised PILOs stated in the programme specification and notes that these are clearly written, measurable and suitable for the type and level of the programme. The Panel is satisfied with the progress achieved in addressing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.5:** *Revise the linkage between the Programme aims and the Programme intended learning outcomes in the new curriculum.*

**Judgement:** *Fully addressed*

As stated earlier, the programme team has developed a new set of PILOs and PEOs to reflect the newly revised programme, and the PILOs were mapped to the PEOs (programme aims) as indicated in the progress report. The Panel examined the mapping of the PILOs to the PEOs, and the supporting documented evidence on this task. The Panel notes that the mapping of PEOs to PILOs was carried on the basis of suitable procedures and relevant mechanisms. The PILOs, PEOs and the mapping were also verified by the programme external examiner. During interview sessions, faculty members confirmed that they have been actively involved in this mapping exercise. Furthermore, the Panel noted that faculty members are aware of the PEOs and PILOs and their linkages and how these are utilised to support the delivery of the programme. The Panel acknowledges that the PILOs are properly linked to the PEOs and is satisfied with the progress achieved by the College in addressing this recommendation.



**Recommendation 1.6:** *Revise the mapping between course intended learning outcomes and Programme intended outcomes when the curriculum is revised.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

The progress report states that in addressing this recommendation, the College has reviewed and revised the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) of all courses comprising the newly revised curriculum, and these CILOs were then mapped to the new set of PILOs. During interviews, the Panel learnt that faculty members have been actively involved in this revision and mapping exercise and are aware of linkages between CILOs and PILOs. The Panel examined the provided samples of course specifications and notes that the revised CILOs are in general well-developed, suitable for the courses' level and type, and properly mapped to the PILOs. The Panel is satisfied with the progress achieved by the College in addressing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.7:** *Enhance the Practicum course to ensure that it directly addresses the needs of the BSIS students within a relevant curriculum.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

International Business Internship (BSIB635) is a compulsory course in the proposed BSIB programme and has been revised to fit the needs of the proposed programme in International Business. The revised specification of this course requires students to undertake a six week (240 hrs) of on-job training experience with an organisation approved by the University. At the end of the 240 hours, students must submit a report reflecting on their experience. During the follow-up visit, the Panel studied a sample of students' reports and noted that these reports, in general, log students' daily work experience, with little integration between the academic material they learnt in the classrooms and the on-job training they experienced. During interview sessions, faculty members confirmed that this course has been revised to fit the needs of the programme, and to this end, the College has already approached a number of companies who have shown willingness to take part in operation of this course. The Panel considers these revisions to be relevant and appropriate and acknowledges that the College has made some progress towards enhancing this course. However, despite the revised course specifications and relevant policies and procedures, the course has remained, in practice, a basic on-job training course with very little requirement for the inclusion of academic material and the integration of theory with practice in International Business as indicated in course specification and the CILOs. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the course specification clearly states how the contribution of this course in attaining the PILOs will be realised and assessed, and that staff, faculty members and training institutions are well-informed of this.

**Recommendation 1.8:** *Review the assessment policies, including formative and summative functions, to ensure synergy and focus on all key intended learning outcomes.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

As stated in the improvement plan and the progress report submitted by the institution, the College had recognised that the assessment policy needed to be reviewed and revised urgently. To this end, the College took action in order to firstly, improve the assessment of each course and its alignment with the stated CILOs and secondly, to improve the synergy between formative and summative assessments. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the main mechanism used for addressing the former objective was through the tightening of the internal moderation policy and revising the guidelines and procedures for the conduct of the pre-assessment moderation by the 'specialisation coordinators' and external examiners. The latter objective was addressed *via* conducting in-service training for the faculty on effective course assessment construction and strategies for implementing formative assessments. From the interview sessions conducted during the follow-up visit, the Panel noted that faculty members are fully aware of the changes in the internal moderation policy and appreciate the key role that the 'specialisation coordinators' have in ensuring that summative assessments are effectively assessing the desired CILOs. Furthermore, during these interviews, faculty members confirmed that they have attended in-service training workshops on the use of formative assessment and have already introduced formative assessment in their teaching and learning activities, in order to enhance synergy between formative and summative assessment. This was confirmed further upon studying the samples of assessed students' work provided during the follow-up visit and interviewed students' feedback. The Panel is satisfied with the institution's progress in addressing this recommendation.

## 2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BSIS programme of AMAIUB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of April 2014, under Indicator 2: Efficiency of the programme; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 2.1:** *Revise the admission policy and related procedures to ensure that the admitted students are appropriate for the BSIS Programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

AMAIUB's revised admission policy requires applicants to all its undergraduate programmes to have a recognised high school certificate with an overall score of at least 60%. In order to be enrolled directly into this programme, applicants must also have a cut off score of 85% and 70% in English and mathematics' high school courses, respectively. Applicants who scored 60-84% in high school English courses can sit for the Online Oxford English Test. If they score 55 or above, they can proceed without having to take a remedial course, while those scoring 54 or less are requested to take a remedial course. Applicants scoring 60-69% in high school mathematics can enrol in the programme after passing the mathematics remedial course. During interview sessions, the Panel learnt that the new admission criteria have been recently enforced, and that the College expects that the new requirements will lead to a better-qualified student being admitted to the programme. The Panel also discussed the new admission policy with members of the PIAP. The Panel noted that they are, overwhelmingly, in support of the new admission policy, and believe that it would help to enhance academic standards across the College. However, no study is yet conducted to assess the appropriateness of the revised policy. The Panel recommends that the College should evaluate students' performance against admission requirements to assess the appropriateness of the admission criteria in selecting students who are suitable for the programme.

**Recommendation 2.2:** *Develop a rigorous mechanism to ensure that academic appointees, both full-time and part-time, hold degrees from bona fide institutions.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

AMAIUB revised the recruitment policy in 2015 to ensure that only recruits from *bona fide* academic institutions are hired. An overview of the new recruitment framework was provided to the Panel. In further exploring this framework, the Panel learnt that the Human Resource (HR) Department undertakes due diligence to scrutinize academic applicants' submitted documents to validate their authenticity. The HR

Department also contacts local regulators and institutions that have granted the awards to verify the information included in the applicants' CVs. In addition, the Panel was informed that the institution complies with the HEC regulations with regards to the recruitment of new faculty members. From examining the provided credentials of existing faculty and from follow-up visit's interviews, the Panel acknowledges that the newly recruited faculty members have appropriate qualifications for the delivery of the programme.

**Recommendation 2.3:** *Ensure that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced in the discipline which they teach.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

In order to address this recommendation, AMAIUB's Academic Council carried out a revision of policy on faculty members' workload. The Panel noted that the scope of this policy revision included a revision of the guidelines for assigning courses, by the Dean, to faculty members on the basis of their academic expertise and experiences. The Panel inspected the policy document and found that there are relevant guidelines on the weekly allocation of teaching, research, and administrative duties for each category of the academic staff. In addition, the Panel also studied the provided sample of faculty's teaching load and compared these to the faculty members' CVs and notes that there is a relevant match between each faculty member's allocated teaching duties and their academic expertise. During interviews, the Panel noted that faculty members are aware of the new policy concerning the allocation and the distribution of teaching duties in the institution. The Panel, however, learnt that a number of faculty members have joined the College during the last few months. This raises a concern in the stability of the faculty members, especially with the relative low staff retention rate the institution exhibits. The Panel is concerned that this might cause faculty members, as it did in the past, to teach outside their specialization. Moreover, the new academic staff would benefit from attending a programme of continuous mentoring and training in teaching and learning, to help enhance the academic standards within the College. Hence, the Panel is of the view that more efforts are needed in this area to ensure stability and continuous improvement in teaching and learning activities within the framework of the new guidelines.

**Recommendation 2.4:** *Recruit experienced research-active academic staff, particularly Associate and Full-Professors in order to enhance the students' exposure to current and relevant research and practice in International Studies.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

According to the progress report, out of a total of 66 faculty members, there is one Professor, 14 Associate Professors, 23 Assistant Professors and 28 Lecturers. The Panel notes that since the academic year 2013-2014, the number of Associate Professors has increased from three to 14 in the College, which is aligned with the college's Development Plan and its strategic objectives in this area. The Panel also notes that this increase in the number of Associate Professors has, by and large, taken place since January 2016 and mostly through recruitment. Moreover, despite the increase in number of Associate Professors within the College, the number of full-time faculty members dedicated to this programme remains the same at only six faculty members (four Assistant Professors and two lecturers). During interview sessions with faculty members, the Panel discussed research activities and how faculty's research output and experience in conducting research are normally used in teaching and learning of the BSIS programme. However, studying the faculty's CVs, the Panel noted that overall the research output of the faculty is not sufficiently large and focused on International Business to inform the curriculum in this area. The Panel recommends that the College should increase the number of full-time research-active faculty members at Associate/Professor level dedicated to the BSIS programme and ensure their retention, as this is a key requirement for the improvement and enhancement in all activities concerning curriculum design and teaching and learning of the programme.

**Recommendation 2.5:** *Implement appropriate mechanisms to address the low promotion and retention rate of academic staff.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

A new Faculty Ranking and Promotion Policy was developed in November 2015, and benchmarked to those of well-established institutions, to address the low promotion of academic staff. In addition, a Ranking and Promotion Committee was established as one of the college's standing committees. In its interviews with committee members, the Panel was informed that the promotion requirements and procedures were revised in the new policy to include a point system that determines faculty's eligibility for promotion to a higher rank. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with the new promotion system as it enables the award of points in three main areas: teaching, research and consultations and community services. During the follow-up visit, the Panel was informed that two faculty members have been recently

promoted as per the new promotion framework. However, the Panel is still concerned with the low retention rate of faculty members in the programme. Data provided indicate that the retention rate during the academic years 2012-2015 ranged between 58.97% and 77.78%. The Panel is concerned that there is no stability amongst faculty members, which might hinder the institution's efforts to improve research and academic standards. During interviews, the Panel learnt that the senior management is working towards addressing this issue through offering a number of incentives. The Panel recommends that the College should analyse the causes of the low faculty retention rates and implement effective mechanisms to significantly improve this rate.

**Recommendation 2.6:** *Significantly improve the physical accommodation for academic staff.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

According to the progress report, the College took cognizance of the review report's recommendation and renovated the faculty's physical accommodation to enhance the efficiency of the BSIS programme delivery. During the follow-up visit, the Panel toured the faculty's offices and noted that no major changes have been introduced since the last site visit, to improve these offices in terms of size, privacy and ventilation. The Panel acknowledges that only senior faculty members (Associate Professors) have been allocated more spacious and better equipped offices. The Panel is of the view that most of the faculty offices are not appropriate and do not provide a conducive environment for scholarly and research activities or the privacy needed when advising students. The Panel hence urges the College to significantly improve the offices of the staff.

**Recommendation 2.7:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

AMAIUB revised the Student at Risk policy and re-named it as the students' Academic Support Services policy. The updated policy includes a revision of the roles and responsibilities of the Academic Affairs and Academic Support Services Units; as well as the inclusion of procedures for at-risk and special needs students. During interview sessions, the implementation of the new policy was explored and the Panel learnt that academic advisors submit periodic reports on students at risk of academic failure, including recommendations on how to improve their performance. Students interviewed by the Panel also indicated that at-risk students are provided with the opportunity to attend tutorial classes as well as being referred to the Guidance Office for guidance and counselling. The Panel notes that the College has recently initiated

the monitoring of the effectiveness of support services provided to at-risk students. The monitoring involves the collection and analysis of data to demonstrate the correlation between at-risk students' grades after participation in intervention measures. The outcomes are utilised by the College to determine the factors that contributed to the intervention programme's success and failure. Evidence of analysis reports that indicate some progress and provide recommendations on the way forward were provided to the Panel. Hence, the Panel acknowledges that the College has improved the implementation and monitoring of at-risk students' intervention mechanisms to ensure that effective academic support is provided to this group of students.

### 3. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BSIS programme of AMAIUB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of April 2016, under Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates; and as a consequence, provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 3.1:** *Re-define the graduate attributes and implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure that they are reliably assessed.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

There are clearly defined graduate attributes in terms of PILOs and PEOs, which were adopted following a number of benchmarking exercises and consultations with the programme's stakeholders. The PEOs have been expressed *via* two general statements at the point of a student's exit from the programme as being able to: (1) 'practice successfully international business careers', and (2) 'promote professionalism and high ethical standards in international business activities'. Moreover, as stated under Indicator 1 in this Report, the revised set of PILOs are suitable for the type and level of the proposed revised programme. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that in order to assess the graduates' attributes, the College has put in place a number of evaluation methods, as well as, direct and indirect assessment mechanisms. These include feedback from alumni and employers, self-evaluation by the students and exit surveys, and the institution's wide assessment framework for the assessment of PILOs and CILOs. In interviews conducted during the follow-up visit, faculty members showed an understanding of the attributes the programme aims to install in its graduates and the various direct and indirect methods and mechanisms put in place for their evaluation and assessment. The Panel discussed these issues with the members of PIAP and learnt that they have been consulted about the new PEOs, PILOs and the corresponding graduate attributes. The Panel also noted that external examiners are utilised to confirm the reliability of the various direct assessment mechanisms put in place by the College for this purpose. The Panel acknowledges that the College has put in place relevant mechanisms to address key issues raised by this recommendation, and urges the College to exert more effort in ensuring that the employed assessment tools are suitable for the different CILOs' categories, including critical thinking (see Recommendation 3.4).



**Recommendation 3.2** *Conduct formal benchmarking procedures with appropriate and relevant national, regional and international programmes in International Studies.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

In response to this recommendation, the College carried out a formal benchmarking exercise with the American University of Sharjah (AUS). As stated in the progress report, the benchmarking activities included the curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment, facilities, and graduation requirements. The Panel discussed the department's formal Benchmarking exercise with senior faculty and CRC members. The Panel noted that members are aware of the relevant procedures for the conduct of a formal benchmarking exercise and the results of the formal benchmarking exercise. During interview session, the programme team indicated that the outcome of this exercise was utilised to revise the BSIS curriculum and convert it into a new curriculum in International Business. However, as stated under Recommendation 1.2, the Panel noted that the only change, initiated as a result of this formal benchmarking exercise, is a minor adjustment to the existing BSIS curriculum. Other areas covered in this formal benchmarking exercise were reported to be similar in approach, content, and provision and, accordingly, have been left unchanged. The Panel acknowledges the revision of the benchmarking policy and its implementation with AUS that led to limited improvement of the programme curriculum. Nonetheless, formal benchmarking exercises on all aspects of the proposed programme, against carefully selected bachelor of International Business programmes offered by national and international universities, are also needed to ensure improvement and enhancement of quality in all key aspects of the proposed AMAIUB programme in International Business. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should carry out a number of additional formal benchmarking exercises against carefully selected bachelor degree programmes offered by national and international universities and expand the utilisation of the benchmark outcomes beyond curriculum improvement.

**Recommendation 3.3:** *Implement appropriate mechanism to ensure the consistent implementation of assessment policies and procedures.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

AMAIUB has a policy on assessment and moderation that has been revised twice; in September 2012 and November 2014. The first was to revise the guidelines on internal moderation and double marking, while the second was to include pre-internal moderation procedure. Currently, both pre- and post-assessment internal moderation of the examination questions and manuscripts are implemented. Moreover, the policy includes an external moderation mechanism where both course and programme external examiners are responsible for verifying examination questions and checking the fairness and consistency of grading, in addition to evaluating the effectiveness of

the internal moderation. During interview sessions, faculty members informed the Panel that the revised internal and external moderations' mechanisms are currently in place. Moreover, faculty members have attended in-house training on marking, moderation, and provision of feedback to students. The Panel checked the provided small sample of students' examination scripts that have been moderated as per the revised policy and found that they follow the procedures stipulated in the revised policy. The Panel also studied the provided sample of external examiners' reports and met (*via* teleconference meeting) with one of the external examiners. From evidence provided and interview sessions, the Panel confirmed that external examiners are aware of the revised moderation policies and have been actively engaged in external moderation of examination questions and scripts; in addition, they are satisfied that the revised assessment mechanisms are appropriate and have so far been effective in assessing CILOs. In assessing the college's progress against this recommendation, the Panel is of the opinion that appropriate internal and external moderation procedures are in place to ensure consistent implementation of assessment policies.

**Recommendation 3.4:** *Ensures the adherence of all faculty members to the CILO Assessment Plan in practice so that category C of the CILOs, critical thinking component of CILOs, is effectively assessed in practice.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The Panel notes that within the framework of the revised assessment policy, there is an internal moderation mechanism in place to ensure that each examination effectively assesses the CILOs, in accordance with the CILOs assessment plan and table included in the course specification. The policy stipulates that assessment tools are required to be reviewed internally by the 'specialisation coordinators', to ensure that sufficient attention and coverage are given in each examination to the critical thinking components of CILOs (category C of the CILOs). An additional three-level safe guard, which involves the verification of each assessment by the Head of Department (HoD), Associate Dean and Dean, to ensure alignment to specified CILOs, is put in place. During interviews, the Panel discussed the revised assessment policy with faculty members, among whom there were a number of 'specialisation coordinators'. It is noted that faculty are actively involved in setting and internally moderating summative assessments. The Panel also noted that faculty are aware of the importance of effectively assessing the category C of the CILOs in the examinations. The Panel reviewed a small sample of students' assessed work, which were made available on-site, and noted some reduction in the number of multiple-choice type questions in favour of an increase in the number of short-essay type questions. The Panel also found evidence of synergy between formative and summative assessments in a number of courses. However, the Panel noted that students' answers corresponding to the category C of CILOs are, by and large, in need of more depth and analysis and,

therefore, is of the view that there is a need for further reviews and innovations to effectively assess this category of the CILOs in the examinations. The Panel acknowledges that the revised internal and external assessment procedures have resulted in some progress towards ensuring an effective assessment of the Category C of the CILOs in practice; however, more efforts are needed in this area, in order to ensure that this recommendation is fully addressed.

**Recommendation 3.5:** *Provide external examiners with a representative sample of students' assessed work in order for them to assess the consistency and fairness of the internal assessment procedures.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

The progress report states that the Programme Head is responsible for providing external examiners with a representative sample of students' assessed work, in addition to all the documents pertaining to their work. Furthermore, the revised moderation policy provides clear guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this task in practice. During interviews, the Panel noted that faculty members are aware of the revised guidelines for the selection of a representative sample of students assessed work for external moderation. Moreover, external examiners' reports reviewed by the Panel and interviews conducted confirmed that representative samples of students assessed work were provided by the faculty to be externally moderated and arrive at an appropriate judgement on the standard of marking and students' overall performance. Hence, the Panel is satisfied with the college's progress with regard to addressing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 3.6:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

In addressing this recommendation, the College has reviewed and revised its approach to setting assessments to ensure that assessment level and expectations are at an appropriate international standard. To this end, each summative assessment is moderated internally and externally to ensure the appropriateness of assessment in terms of type of questions, content, level, and the duration of examination. During Interviews, the Panel learnt that faculty members have been actively involved in setting summative and formative assessments and some have also taken part in internal moderation of assessments as 'specialisation coordinators'. The Panel reviewed external examiners' reports and noted that the examiners have been actively involved on a regular basis in moderation and in commenting on questions of summative assessments. Furthermore, the Panel noted that external examiners'

reports show the appropriateness of the level of the assessment questions and their comparability with international standards. This latter observation was confirmed by the Panel upon inspection of the provided small sample of assessment questions and through interview sessions conducted during the follow-up visit. The Panel acknowledges the college's progress in addressing this recommendation and recommends that the College expand the external moderation to all forms of assessment.

**Recommendation 3.7:** *Revise the PILO evaluation tools to ensure their alignment with the PILOs in the revised curriculum.*

**Judgement:** *partially addressed*

As detailed under Recommendations 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6, the College has developed a new set of PILOs that are suitable for the proposed new programme in International Business. These PILOs are properly mapped to the programme aims. Moreover, the CILOs of all courses were reviewed and revised where needed and these are in general properly mapped to the revised set of PILOs. The programme specification states that 'assessment is done independently for each course' and that there is a variety of assessment tools utilized, such as 'major exams, assignments, case analysis and presentations'. This is in addition to the capstone project, on-job training element and indirect assessments that are utilised to assess the achievement of learning outcomes. The Panel also noted the number of mechanisms introduced to ensure that assessment tools are properly mapped to the PILOs (see Recommendation 3.3). However, the Panel notes that in order to fully address this recommendation, the College needs to further enhance the alignment of its assessment tools to Category C of the learning outcomes (see Recommendation 3.4)

**Recommendation 3.8:** *Determine and adopt a precise definition of an inactive student, and revise the associated policies and procedures in order to enhance the efficiency and academic standards of the BSIS Programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

In response to this recommendation, the College has provided a revised definition for 'inactive students' based on the number of years that a student is absent from the programme. According to this definition, a student is identified as 'inactive' if he/she had a 'Leave of Absence' of two years or longer. This definition and the procedure for obtaining a Leave of Absence are disseminated to students *via* the Student Handbook. Interviewed staff members and students indicated to the Panel that they have been informed of policies and procedures concerning inactive students. The Panel also reviewed a preliminary report on inactive students, which indicated that the key reasons for granting a Leave of Absence is either due to 'pressure of work' or 'personal

reasons'. The Panel acknowledges that the College has made some progress towards clarifying the meaning of an 'inactive student' and drafted procedures to be used for granting a Leave of Absence. However, the Panel is of the view that there is a need for initiating an effective mechanism to urgently deal with the 'inactive students' listed on the BSIS programme, in order to maintain and enhance the efficiency of the programme.

**Recommendation 3.9:** *Present the PIAP with vital statistics to assist them in making informed decisions leading to the improvement of the BSIS Programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The progress report states that, in response to this recommendation, the College has increased the number of its annual meetings with the PIAP members from two to five. Moreover, the PIAP is presented with some vital statistics on progression and retention of students, in order to enable this group to make informed decisions concerning key strategic and operational issues. During interviews the Panel noted that PIAP members are keen to be actively involved in the proposed BSIB programme and to contribute to key strategic and operational decisions concerning its development. However, it was made clear to the Panel that there is a need for a timely and regular provision of vital statistics on key operational and strategic issues in practice. Hence, the Panel is of the view that the College has partially addressed this recommendation and there is a need for a regular and timely provision of vital strategic and operational statistics to the PIAP members, to assist them in making informed decisions to help to improve all key aspects of this programme.

#### **4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance**

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BSIS programme of AMAIUB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of April 2014, under Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 4.1:** *Revise the Academic Policies and Procedures handbook to provide detailed explanations of procedures to assist in uniform decision making.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

The progress report states that the Academic Policies and Procedures Handbook was revised before the start of the academic year 2015-2016. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that the revision of the Handbook was in alignment with the institutional procedures for the review and approval of university's policies. From the review of the provided evidence, the Panel notes that clear and specific information was added to the revised policies to assist in informed decision-making. For example, the 'Study Duration Policy' included the maximum number of years needed to complete undergraduate studies. Moreover, the policies and procedures on Eligibility for Graduation clearly indicate the required minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) for graduation. The Panel acknowledges that the requested revisions in the Academic Policies Handbook were made to enable the uniform and effective implementation of institutional policies.

**Recommendation 4.2:** *Ensure adherence to criteria set by the institution in implementing policies and procedures to ensure effectiveness.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

To ensure adherence to criteria set by AMAIUB, the College enhanced the current policies and procedures awareness mechanisms, as detailed in Recommendation 4.3. From different interviews, the Panel noted that improvements in the mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the quality assurance system have also contributed to ensuring adherence to institutional policies criteria. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel provided several examples of how the enhanced dissemination and monitoring of institutional policies and procedures have led to their effective implementation. This was confirmed by provided evidence on adherence to the conduct of formal benchmarking, and the implementation of the internal and external moderation of examination scripts. The Panel acknowledges that the College

has implemented appropriate mechanisms to ensure adherence to criteria set in the institution's policies and procedures.

**Recommendation 4.3:** *Enhance existing mechanism for the dissemination of the institution's policies to all stakeholders.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

According to the progress report, the institution has developed a comprehensive approach for enhancing the existing mechanisms for the dissemination of institutional policies to all stakeholders, in line with the university's Public Information and Dissemination policy. During different interviews, the Panel learnt that an overview of policies and procedures is included in the induction programmes of all stakeholders, as well as in the annual Quality Assurance (QA) awareness campaign for faculty members, administrative staff and students. The Panel was also informed that updates on policies is communicated *via* faculty e-mail, AMAIUB website, faculty notice boards as well as in departmental council meetings. Moreover, all relevant policies and procedures are included in institutional publications such as Faculty and Student Handbooks. The monitoring of the effectiveness of the policy disseminating mechanisms is conducted by the Committee for Quality Improvement (CQI) and is reported in the internal quality audit reports. Provided evidence indicates that stakeholders are satisfied in terms of dissemination of relevant policies and procedures of the University, as gleaned from the academic year 2014-2015 annual satisfaction survey. This was confirmed during interviews with faculty members and students. The Panel appreciates that institutional policies are effectively communicated *via* various channels to all stakeholders

**Recommendation 4.4:** *Implement appropriate mechanisms for the development of sustainable leadership in the programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The progress report states that leadership development is a major focus in the institution's strategic planning. During interviews, the Panel learnt that a number of initiatives have been implemented to enhance faculty members' contribution to the leadership of the BSIS programme. The Panel was informed that a mentoring plan and policy are being currently developed to empower junior faculty members and prepare them for future responsibilities. A copy of Peer Mentoring Report was provided to the Panel. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel also indicated that they participate in various committees, which enables them to contribute to decision-making beyond the operational levels. The Panel studied the succession plan provided with the progress report and notes that it consists of one page that highlights the main skills and competencies expected in senior faculty members and administrators. In

exploring the issue with senior management, the Panel learnt that the AMAIUB aims to enhance the current succession planning mechanisms that will enable the institution to develop sustainable leadership within the programme. Hence, the Panel acknowledges the college's effort and recommends that the College should establish a more comprehensive mechanism to ensure the development of future leaders.

**Recommendation 4.5:** *Improve current mechanisms for the implementation and monitoring of the quality assurance system to ensure its effectiveness.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

A well-documented Quality Management System (QMS) is in place and is applied to all programmes across the institution. AMAIUB has developed and implemented a number of mechanisms to enhance the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the QMS. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) has recently reviewed all rubrics used in evaluating assessments so that they better reflect the quality of the assessed student works. Moreover, the 'Likert' scale used in evaluating PILOs through direct assessment was revised to include new descriptions of each scale number. Evidence of implementation of these changes was provided to the Panel. The effective implementation of the current QA system, including policies and procedures, is monitored by the CQI at college level and the QAAO at institutional level. In its interviews with committee members, the Panel confirmed that the CQI oversees and reports on all continuous quality improvement processes, and that its recommendations are included in the College Improvement Plan. The implementation of the submitted Improvement Plan is verified *via* a follow-up audit. The Panel acknowledges that the College has introduced improvements in the implementation and monitoring of the current quality assurance system to enhance its effectiveness.

**Recommendation 4.6:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

AMAIUB has implemented a number of initiatives to enhance the dissemination of quality assurance information among all staff and students. A Quality Assurance Awareness Week is conducted annually, during which all newly recruited staff and students are oriented regarding their respective roles and responsibilities in the institutional quality assurance processes. During interviews, the Panel was informed that academic and administrative staff are encouraged to attend the quality assurance workshops conducted by the QAAO. The Panel also notes that the job descriptions of support staff were revised to emphasize their role in quality assurance. As indicated



earlier, the College conducts regular training on the dissemination of new policies and procedures, including those pertaining to QA issues, to ensure that all faculty members are informed about these policies and procedures. From its interviews with faculty members, administrative staff and students, the Panel acknowledges that these stakeholders are adequately aware of the quality assurance procedures and their role in the quality cycle.

**Recommendation 4.7:** *Ensure the addition of a timeline to the Self-Evaluation Survey to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of corrective action planned.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

The progress report indicates that the Planning and Development Office spearheaded the review and revision of various templates to ensure that all improvement plans and evaluation reports include clear and specific timelines for the various actions. In its interviews with faculty, the Panel was informed that the revised templates enabled the effective implementation of planned initiatives in alignment with indicated timelines and performance indicators. The Panel also learnt that the action plans are closely monitored by the planning office, which in turn, reports any deviations to the Head of Academics or Head of Administration. The Panel notes, from provided evidence, that a specific timeline is indicated for each evaluation/improvement activity. Moreover, several examples of adherence to timelines were provided to the Panel during interviews. The Panel acknowledges the addition of timelines to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of corrective actions arising from the annual internal programme evaluation.

**Recommendation 4.8:** *Utilise the output of external reviews in the improvement of all aspects of the programme, including physical resources, faculty members, professional development and research output.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

According to the progress report, the feedback from both internal and external stakeholders is analysed and discussed within respective college standing committees. During interview sessions, the Panel learnt that identified gaps and findings are consolidated into an improvement plan that, amongst other issues, addresses stakeholders' recommendations. The Panel was also provided with several examples of how the College utilizes the output of external reviews in the improvement of various aspects of the BSIS programme. These include improvements in curriculum design, library acquisitions, and laboratory equipment. However, the Panel is of the view that some aspects are in need of further enhancement; these include the improvement in faculty's offices (see Recommendation 2.6) and staff professional development (see Recommendation 4.10). The Panel encourages the College to utilise

effectively the outcome of external reviews for the improvement of all aspects of the programme.

**Recommendation 4.9:** *Enhance the current mechanisms for the dissemination of survey results to make the outcome of the surveys available to all constituents.*

**Judgement: Fully Addressed**

Appropriate procedures for the collection and analysis of stakeholders' feedback and recommendations are clearly stated in the Institution's Survey Manual. The progress report states that AMAIUB has enhanced the mechanisms for the dissemination of survey results. In its interviews with faculty members, the Panel learnt that the surveys analysis results are communicated to relevant stakeholders *via* various channels including the university website, bulletin boards and departmental meetings. Students interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with the recent enhancements in communicating students survey results. The Panel notes that the official newsletter of AMAIUB (DATA LINE) includes the results of both student and alumni's satisfaction surveys. Moreover, PIAP members indicated that the results of employers surveys are shared with them during PIAP meetings, and that the outcomes are utilised to inform decision-making. The Panel acknowledges the enhancement of mechanisms for the dissemination of survey results to all constituents *via* appropriate channels.

**Recommendation 4.10:** *Improve the existing mechanisms for the staff professional development to ensure that all staff are provided with sufficient and appropriate opportunities in line with the Institution's strategic plan.*

**Judgement: Partially Addressed**

In its quest to enhance the effectiveness of the arrangements for identifying professional development needs for all staff, the College has conducted orientation sessions for faculty members on how the Faculty Development Plan is linked to AMAIUB's Strategic Plan. In addition, a training needs analysis (TNA) for the administrative staff was conducted by the HR Department. In its interviews with faculty members, the Panel learnt that these initiatives are cascaded to individual faculty development plan. A list of recent professional development activities is provided in the progress report and supporting evidence. The Panel acknowledges the College's recent efforts to improve the existing mechanisms for staff professional development, as evident from the development of 2015-2016 Faculty Development Plan and the Staff Training Plan. However, the Panel notes from follow-up visit's interviews as well as from provided evidence that the link between staff appraisal and professional development activities is in need of further enhancement. Moreover, faculty members need to be provided with adequate opportunities to participate in international conferences, workshops and seminars. The Panel encourages the College

to closely monitor the implementation of its staff professional plans to ensure that all staff are provided with sufficient and appropriate opportunities, as well as to inform future improvements in this regard.

**Recommendation 4.11:** *Develop a mechanism for better local market scanning resulting in updated custom-made data for programme development and enhancement purposes.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

As part of its strategic planning process, AMAIUB has developed an ongoing mechanism for better local market scanning in order to gauge the latest trends in the programmes offered by the institution. In this regard, AMAIUB commissioned a consultancy agency to conduct targeted market studies for all of the programmes offered by the College. In its interview with senior management, the Panel learnt that the scoping study covered all aspects of required skills and recent developments, in light of data obtained from both private and public sectors. The Panel notes that the findings of the market scoping report were utilised to inform improvements in the revised programme and support the move into a programme with emphasis on International Business. In addition, the Panel was informed that AMAIUB will continue to utilise the PIAP feedback, as well as available published market studies for scoping the labour market. The Panel acknowledges that appropriate mechanisms are implemented for labour market scoping, including the collection of primary data, to ensure that the BSIS programme is up to date and meets the market needs.

## 5. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own progress report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the follow-up visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA Follow-up Visits of Academic Programme Reviews Procedure:

**The Bachelor of Science in International Studies programme offered by AMA International University - Bahrain has made Adequate Progress and as a result, the programme will not be subjected to another follow-up visit.**

## Appendix 1: Judgement per recommendation.

Judgement	Standard
<b>Fully Addressed</b>	The institution has demonstrated marked progress in addressing the recommendation. The actions taken by the programme team have led to significant improvements in the identified aspect and, as a consequence, in meeting the Indicator's requirements.
<b>Partially Addressed</b>	The institution has taken positive actions to address the recommendation. There is evidence that these actions have produced improvements and that these improvements are sustainable. The actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the programme to meet the Indicator's requirements.
<b>Not Addressed</b>	The institution has not taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation and/or actions taken have little or no impact on the quality of the programme delivery and the academic standards. Weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation.

## Appendix 2: Overall Judgement.

Overall Judgement	Standard
<b>Good progress</b>	The institution has fully addressed the majority of the recommendations contained in the review report, and/or previous follow-up report, these include recommendations that have most impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. The remaining recommendations are partially addressed. <b>No further follow-up visit is required.</b>
<b>Adequate progress</b>	The institution has at least partially addressed most of the recommendations contained in the review report and/or previous follow-up report, including those that have major impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. There is a number of recommendations that have been fully addressed and there is evidence that the institution can maintain the progress achieved. <b>No further follow-up visit is required.</b>
<b>Inadequate progress</b>	The institution has made little or no progress in addressing a significant number of the recommendations contained in the review report and/or previous follow-up report, especially those that have main impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. For first follow-up visits, a second follow-up visit is required.