Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programme Review Report

Ahlia University
College of Business and Finance
Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
Kingdom of Bahrain

Site Visit Date: 21-24 November 2021

HA045-C3-R045

Table of Contents

Acronyms

ACID	Ahlia Centre for Information and Documentation
ADREG	Admission and Registration Information System
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee
AU	Ahlia University
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSMM	Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CME	Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
ICTC	Information and Communication Technology Centre
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QMS	Quality Management System
TLAC	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
UC	University Council

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *3*

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

Standard 1: **The Learning Programme**

Standard 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *4*

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

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

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

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *5*

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Ahlia University
College/ Department*	College of Business and Finance/Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
Qualification Approval Number	• Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. (1626-03) of 2001 • Higher Education Council Letter No. (**81 -2008 /م ت أ**) of 2008 • Higher Education Council Decision No. (93) of Meeting (11/2008) of 2008
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Validation Date
Number of Units*	134
NQF Credit	548 credits
Programme Aims*	• To equip students with in-depth knowledge and multi-perspectives on sustainable management and marketing. • To cultivate students' competencies in relation to practical application and professional standards in the domains of management and marketing. • To develop students' enterprise skills and leadership styles through demonstration of effective communication, teamwork and global citizenship. • To develop students' awareness of and appreciation for social and ethical responsibilities at the societal and global levels. • To equip students with creativity and innovation skills to apply life-long learning and research in sustainable management and marketing practice.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	**A. Knowledge and Understanding:** **A1.** Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of theoretical fundamentals of management and marketing, their application to contemporary issues to derive alternative solutions. **A2.** Investigate and interpret contemporary trends, major issues related to sustainable management and marketing through the execution of defined research projects. **A3.** Demonstrate knowledge and adherence to professional responsibilities and business practices, as a business professional, in the field Management and Marketing.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *6*

B. Subject-Specific Skills:

B1. Use specialist-level technological and marketing skills to analyze management and marketing data and generating output used in decision-making.

B2. Demonstrate creativity in using management and marketing strategies and models, empirically identify causal factors underlying, as well as to predict management and marketing trends.

B3. Apply specialist software-based information systems and statistical tools, to generate reliable data used in sustainable decision-making in the area of management and marketing.

C. Critical Thinking Skills:

C1. Critically analyze and interpret business situation and organizational management information focusing on management and marketing techniques.

C2. Demonstrate insight of management and marketing principles and theories in conjunction with professional judgment to generate conclusions in a range of relevant contexts.

C3. Demonstrate creativity in identifying complex contemporary management and marketing issues as well as the implementation of relevant solutions.

D. General and Transferable Skills (other skills relevant to employability and personal development):

D1. Use specific skills to communicate technical concepts and theories to a variety of audiences by oral, electronic and written means.

D2. Operate at specialized level enterprise, leadership and teamwork skills to lead, multiple and heterogeneous teams within the framework of jointly tackling problems encountered in collaborating efficiently in a variety of professional contexts.

D3. Demonstrate organizational skills and life-long skills needed to support personal and professional development aligned with independent learning.

D4. Demonstrate and appreciate ethical and social reasoning in the decision-making of corporate and governmental organizations in terms of stakeholder welfare including a comprehensive examination of the importance of sustainable development to the economy and society.

* Mandatory fields

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Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 7

III. Judgment Summary

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The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

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Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	**The Learning Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	**Addressed**
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	**Addressed**
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	**Partially addressed**
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	**Addressed**
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	**Addressed**
Standard 2	**Efficiency of the Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	**Addressed**
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	**Addressed**
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	**Addressed**
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	**Addressed**
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	**Addressed**
Standard 3	**Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	**Addressed**
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	**Partially addressed**
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	**Addressed**
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	**Addressed**

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *8*

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	**Addressed**
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	**Addressed**
Standard 4	**Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	**Addressed**
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	**Addressed**
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	**Addressed**
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	**Addressed**
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	**Addressed**

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *9*

IV. Standards and Indicators

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Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

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Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

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

Judgment: Addressed

- As per the Self-evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation, the University Vision and Mission statements direct the formulation of a University-wide five-year strategic plan, which is translated into annual Operational Plans (OPs) at the university and college levels. The OPs identify specific projects, activities and tasks for the year that are aimed at attaining annual targets, including specific actions at the programme level. The minutes of meetings of the College Council provide evidence of reviewing and approving OPs. In interviews the Panel was informed that the Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing (BSMM) programme has been designed to be aligned with the plans of Ahlia University (AU) and the College of Business and Finance, as reflected in the Programme Specification and AU's Graduate Attributes, which have been developed at a university level. The Panel concludes that there is a clear academic planning framework for the programme related to the Mission and strategic goals of the Institution and the College. The Panel appreciates the integrated planning framework devised from a strategic to programme level. The Panel also notes that there is alignment of the BSMM programme with professional standards through the exemption of selected modules of the certificate and diploma of the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and was informed in interviews that this was also done to instill lifelong learning as a graduate attribute.

- Potential risks including those related to the quality of the programme and its delivery are managed at the university, college and programme levels. A university standing committee chaired by the Vice President for Admin and Finance oversees risk management at the institutional level, and a risk register is maintained. Potential risks are identified by the College and Department Councils. The Panel was also informed during

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *10*

interviews that the BSMM programme admissions and throughput levels, as well as staff turnover are regularly monitored by the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems. The Panel was also informed of various decisions that were taken by the College in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to enable online course delivery and assessment to continue, while simultaneously ensuring staff and student health and safety.

- The BSMM Programme adheres to the requirement of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It was placed at level 8 on the NQF during 2016 and was re-validated during the 2019-2020 academic year. The programme title 'Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing' is concise and indicative of the qualification type and content. This is also reflected in the BSMM certificates and transcripts. The programme description and documentation can be accessed online via the AU's webpage.

- The programme aims are set out in the BSMM Programme Specification and are clear and appropriate for the degree. These aims have been revised as part of the periodic programme review process and in consultation with the College External Advisory Board, which includes members from the industry.

- The five programme aims intend to develop management and marketing knowledge and competencies; student enterprise skills and leadership styles; an appreciation for social and ethical responsibilities; and creativity and innovation skills. These aims are consistent with the strategic intent of AU and the College of Business and Finance, as reflected in their Vision and Mission statements.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

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

Judgment: Addressed

- A list of 10 generic graduate attributes have been identified and each has been mapped against one or more of the BSMM Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). From the documentation provided and in interviews, the Panel learned about a range of activities including guest speakers, field trips, competitions, conferences and events that helped to develop these graduate attributes in BSMM students. The Panel is satisfied with the range of co-curricular arrangements for BSMM students, which aim to develop the University's graduate attributes.

- The PILOs set out in the Programme Specification are appropriately written and have been mapped against programme aims and graduate attributes. The examination of a sample

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 11

of course files indicates that Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are included in the course syllabi specification and are set out in a standard template. The CILOs for the BSMM programme cover a range of areas of knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, critical thinking skills, and general and transferable skills. The examination of course files also indicates appropriate mapping and alignment of CILOs to PILOs. The Panel is satisfied with the clear lines of mapping between CILOs, PILOs and graduate attributes.

- According to the Quality Assurance Manual to ensure the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) remain relevant, periodic reviews are to be conducted every three years. The Panel was informed that the last periodic review of the BSMM programme took place in 2020. While no formal benchmarking exercise has been carried out, the Panel was informed of desktop research that had been conducted to compare the programme to others locally, regionally and internationally, as well as to that of professional bodies. Furthermore, the AU Assessment Manual makes explicit reference to the NQF and its requirements and provides guidelines to ensure that there is an appropriate ILO-Assessment linkage.

- In the second semester of their fourth year of the BSMM programme, students complete a project in management or a project in marketing. In preparation for, and as a prerequisite for starting this project, students must complete courses in Research Methods (BFRM 498), Business Ethics (ETHC 391) and Statistics (STAT 202). As a collective, the ILOs of these courses are well aligned to the PILOs and the programme aims.

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

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

Judgment: Partially Addressed

- The BSMM programme is offered over four years, with students registering for either five or six three-credit courses per semester (except for a single two-credit course). The programme includes a mandatory internship at the end of the third year of study and a research project in the final semester. The programme constitutes 134 credit hours in total, which is equal to 548 NQF credits. The courses are classified as 20 credit hours university requirements, 24 credits hours college requirements, 72 credits hours programme requirements, 6 credit hours is allocated for programme major electives, 3 hours is allocated for the internship, 6 credit hours for free electives and 3 credits for humanities and social sciences. The study plan is clearly set out, with the specified prerequisite courses providing a clear progression over the four years. Free elective and major elective

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *12*

courses provide the opportunity for students to specialise in either management or marketing, while the core courses provide coverage of both management and marketing.

- As part of a periodic review, desktop research has been conducted to compare the BSMM programme to equivalent programmes locally, regionally and internationally. The Panel learned that as an outcome of the periodic review, a new core course has been introduced in Digital and Social Media Marketing (MAKT423), and a new major elective Strategic Leadership and Change Management (MAGT325). The Panel notes that at the inception of the programme, the BSMM curriculum was based upon a programme of Brunel University, UK as part of their 2004 Memorandum of Academic Cooperation. The Panel recommends that AU should update the Memorandum of Academic Cooperation with Brunel University, UK so that it accurately reflects the current set of arrangements. A benchmarking agreement has been signed with two local universities but in interviews the Panel learned that these have not been fully implemented. The BSMM programme content was also compared with the content of the professional certificate of the CIM, and arrangements have been made for the exemption of the Strategic Marketing (MAKT425) course for those students following the Professional Marketing specialization who have completed any two of the following four electives: Marketing Research, Marketing of Financial Services, Advertising and Promotions Management, and Customer Relationship Management. The Panel notes that there are no equivalent arrangements with a professional body for those students following the management specialization that in interviews. It was clarified that the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) was to be approached in the near future. The Panel encourages AU to expedite this process to create an equivalent professional path for those students pursuing a management specialisation.

- As a mechanism to ensure an appropriate balance between theory and practice, the PILOs and CILOs are mapped to ensure a fair distribution of ILOs in terms of areas related to knowledge and understanding, practical application and problem solving, critical thinking and general and transferable skills. Furthermore, the study plan provides a balance between more theoretically orientated courses in management and marketing, versus those that are more applied in nature. For example, amongst core courses, Fundamentals of Management (MAGT121) appears to be more theoretical, while Accounting (ACC101, ACC201), Business Statistics (STAT202) and Quantitative Analysis for Business (MAGT310) are applied courses. In interviews, the Panel learned that as part of the adjustments to online learning due to the Covid-19, a continuous assessment approach was adopted, with case studies being utilised as a popular form of teaching and learning and assessment, thereby placing greater emphasis on application.

- Over and above the mandatory foundational courses (e.g., Academic English) the BSMM study plan contains a combination of management and marketing courses. All students are exposed to courses in finance, accounting and economics. Over the four years of the

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *13*

programme there are seven required courses with the course code MAGT and four with the course code MAKT, suggesting that all students have a broad foundational knowledge of management, including those interested in a marketing specialisation. For the two major elective courses, a student can select from ten elective courses consisting of four management electives, five marketing electives, and one Business Data Analytics (ITMA304) course. In the fourth year of the programme there are a further four combinations of subject-area specialisms, either in management or marketing. The BSMM programme is designed in this manner to provide the knowledge and skills needed for entry level positions in either the marketing field or in general management in business or government. The Panel notes that Sales Management (MAKT322) is included as a core course, while Advertising and Promotions Management (MAKT332), Customer Relationship Management (MAKT341) and Service Marketing (MAKT 416) are electives. The Panel also notes that Integrated Marketing Communication (MKT370) and Product & Brand Management (MKT360) have been identified in their investigation into the content of the BSMM programme and Brand managers being identified as part of the programme's graduate employment targets. To meet the norms and standards of the particular academic discipline, the Panel recommends that the BSMM team should revise the study plan to include more courses related to labour market needs such as putting Advertising & Promotions Management (MAKT332) as a core course. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that Integrated Marketing Communication (MKT370) and Product & Brand Management (MKT360) should be included as elective courses and Sales Management (MAKT322) be placed as an elective course, rather than a core course.

- The Panel was provided with the course syllabus for six courses. The dates of the prescribed textbooks for five of these courses ranged from 2015 to 2020, while the course Marketing Strategy (MAKT421) was utilising a 2010 textbook. Curricular content tends to be in line with current research topics and trends in the field, with a few courses providing journal articles as supplementary texts/references (e.g., Ethics & Professional Practice in Business (ETHC391), Digital and Social Media Marketing (MAKT423) and several including case studies as a teaching resource. The Panel recommends that the College should regularly review and update the prescribed textbooks and reading materials for all courses.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU has a Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2025) that addresses policy issues. Specifically, Initiative 2 aims 'To promote and Support Excellence through outcome based

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *14*

Impactful Teaching and Learning'. The Performance Indicators include 'Innovative Teaching Methods', 'Virtual Teaching and Learning', and 'Adaptation of Smart Teaching Tools'. The implementation of this plan is monitored by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC) in coordination with the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA). Furthermore, the Plan was revised in line with the University Strategic Plan for 2021-2025, and supports Strategic Objective 5, which aims to 'create an exceptional learning environment…'. Furthermore, as part of its annual review, the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems is required to assess the appropriateness of teaching and learning methods and report on co-curricular and extracurricular activities and events.

- The BSMM Programme Specification and the sample of course files provided describe a range of teaching and learning methods, including lectures, simulations, group work, group discussions, course projects, assignments, and case studies, which are all appropriate, given the nature of the BSMM. E-learning takes place through the use of the Moodle platform. In addition, the Panel was informed that MS Teams has been used extensively for online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Panel is satisfied that all the utilized teaching methods support the attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

- Lifelong learning is incorporated into the goals of the College of Business and Finance [SER]. In the Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2025), Initiative 3 aims 'To develop a Range of Teaching and Learning Strategies that provide students with opportunities to enhance their employability and foster research and life-long learning'. This is to be achieved through industry-based internships, appropriate teaching and learning strategies, and promoting skills for an entrepreneurial mindset and research. The College of Business and Finance has established a club which keeps the students engaged with different types of formal and informal learning activities. The Panel learned from both faculty and students that a variety of formal, informal and non-formal learning activities have been held including industry guest speakers, workshops, field trips, competitions (e.g., INJAZ Bahrain, TradeQuest), events (e.g., Together Safe Stand Against Fear & Extremism) and career days. The Panel was informed that the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Research works with the College to arrange research related activities. For example, some students participated in Pearl Initiative Case Study Competition, while the final projects of other students were published. The Panel notes that the alignment of the BSMM programme to the CIM through module exemptions also promotes lifelong learning.

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

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

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 15

Judgment: Addressed

- The AU Assessment Manual sets out a wide range of policies and procedures related to the assessment of courses. It has been revised recently to ensure it complies with the Higher Education Council (HEC) and BQA standards, as well as NQF requirements, and is now in its fifth version. The manual covers policies and procedures related to the university's assessment design, transparency and security of assessment. It also includes regulations for the marking of assessments and their internal and external verification and moderation and approval. Finally, it covers feedback on the student assessments, student challenge of grade, appeals processes, and academic misconduct. Every semester, the Department is required to report to the College Council and the TLAC on the implementation of the assessment policy and procedures.

- The Assessment Manual is made available to academic staff and students through the website and Ahlia SharePoint. A workshop was conducted to all academic staff highlighting the revisions made to the Manual; and it is sent to external assessor's/examiners once they have been appointed as clarified in the virtual site visit interviews. It is also summarised in the Student Handbook and drawn to students' attention during their induction day. The Panel is satisfied with the communication of assessment requirements to students.

- Regarding formative assessments the Panel notes that 'Course assessments must include formative methods mapped to the ILOs so that students receive guidance on how to approach an assessed task and also feedback on their learning to aid further learning within a course…'. In the course files examined, within the Course Syllabus/ Specification document, the description and weighting of assessment tasks, as well as their relevant outcomes are provided in a table format, alongside each method of assessment. According to the Feedback Policy contained within the Assessment Manual, students are to receive prompt and detailed feedback. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the promptness and quality of feedback received. They also noted that this feedback was often discussed in lectures in preparation for final assessment tasks. External assessors reported that during the period of online teaching due to the Covid, continuous assessment tasks frequently took the form of case studies. They were of the view that greater emphasis on theory was required at the undergraduate level. Therefore, the Panel suggests when classes return to face-to-face lectures the mode of assessment that was adapted during Covid-19 pandemic be reviewed to get an appropriate balance between case study analysis and theoretical components.

- Internal and external moderation procedures of assessments are set out in the Assessment Manual. An internal moderation committee consisting of the instructor, a course verifier who must have the requisite expertise in the course, and the Chairperson monitors the assessment process both prior to the delivery of the course and after the final examinations

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 16

as clarified in interviews. Moderation of any major assessments weighted at 20% or above, is validated at the pre-assessment stage and adjusted if necessary. In post-assessment moderation, the internal moderation committee completes a form and selects samples of work with high, average and low scores and places them in the course file. This internal moderation process is then verified by an external assessor who checks for alignment of tasks with ILOs, the appropriateness of the assessment task to the course and its level, and fairness and accuracy in marking and grades as clarified in interviews and the submitted evidence.

- An Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy and Procedure is included in the Assessment Manual. During their orientation and at the beginning of each course, students are informed about issues of academic misconduct and plagiarism. In the event of a case of misconduct, a Discipline Committee is convened to assess and carry out disciplinary procedures and impose any penalties in line with the policy. No evidence was provided of any disciplinary committee having been convened, and the Panel learned that there had not been any occurrence of serious cases of misconduct that would have required a disciplinary hearing.

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Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 17

Standard 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 2.1: Admitted Students

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU Admission Policy and BSMM specific entry requirements are provided in several documents accessible to prospective students, including AU website, Admission Brochure, and Student Handbook. The BSMM admission requirements were recently revised to include programme-specific criteria. This consists of an adequate score in the Secondary School Certificate (Tawjihia) or its equivalent, English proficiency requirements, and Mathematics proficiency requirements. Students proficient in Mathematics and English are exempted from the orientation programme. When a student does not meet the proficiency levels, the Directorate of Admission and Registration (DOAR) conducts placement tests in coordination with the College of Arts and Science. The student is required to attend the orientation programme in their first semester. The BSMM statistical information shows that 40 students registered for orientation courses over the last five years. It was communicated during the interviews that AU welcomes all students in a transparent, fair, non-discriminatory way as admission is based on merit, which is in line with the Revised Admissions Policy.

- The Panel finds the admission requirements appropriate for the programme and consistent with local and international standards. AU adopts best practices in line with the standards and expectations set out by BQA in relation to the recognition of prior learning. In addition, AU Admission Policy is designed to ensure full compliance with the Bahrain Ministry of Education and HEC rules and regulations relevant to student admission and credit transfer from recognized institutions.

- The entry programme-specific requirements are reviewed regularly by the Department, College, and University Councils. Examples are the changes in admission proficiency scores in 2018. While no formal benchmarking exercise has been carried out, during the

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *18*

virtual site visit interviews, the Panel was informed of desktop research that had been conducted to compare the admission criteria with other programmes locally, regionally and internationally, as well as to the requirements of professional bodies.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The Academic Staff Bylaws include chapters on faculty appointment, promotion, and performance evaluation. In addition, there is the Human Resource Policy and Procedures Handbook, which refers to hiring based on merit and ends with the University Council for final approval, after which an offer of appointment is made. Human Resource Directorate assumes the responsibility for the induction of new staff members, introducing them to the institution, its rules, and operations. An Overall Annual Faculty Evaluation Process is followed and is linked to the Faculty Professional Development Plan, including furthering their postgraduate studies. Evidence is provided of several promotions over the past few years. During the interviews, the faculty explained to the Panel how helpful they found having a mentor assigned to them when settling in at AU.

- AU has a new Research Plan 2021-2025 and Research Rules and Regulations. The publications show evidence of research activity and contribution to knowledge creation and dissemination. The interviews highlighted that available funding, among other incentives, encourages quality research outputs.

- AU has an approved detailed policy for Teaching Load. This policy covers teaching and supervision responsibilities only and is aligned with the HEC requirements. Although the interviews revealed a good understanding of the workload allocation, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the workload allocation by considering community engagement and other extra-curricular activities as part of it. It was noted that several female academics hold managerial positions at AU in line with the country's initiatives to empower women in the workplace. In addition to other AU's regulations to supports women as clarified during interviews.

- Staff qualifications indicate that most academics in the College have a PhD degree and collectively cover all the areas of specialisation related to the programme. According to the statistical information provided, in 2020-2021, there were 40 academic staff in the College with different rankings and specialisation. This number has remained reasonably

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   19

constant since 2017, with the majority employed on a full-time basis. In 2020-2021, there were 192 full-time and 29 part-time students registered in the programme.

- AU has a Professional Development Committee and Plan. The professional development needs of staff are devised annually based on performance appraisals and evaluation. Faculty members propose their requirements through a representative from the College on the Professional Development Committee. This includes being trained in research supervision. AU has an understanding with Brunel University to train research supervisors. Furthermore, in the past five years, sixteen faculty members were sponsored to do their PhD degree with nine of them teaching on the BSMM programme.

- The retention rate of the College of Business and Finance faculty members was 92% in 2019 and 95% in 2020. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that two of the staff members who left are still affiliated with AU. The Panel is satisfied with the mechanisms in place to ensure the retention of academic staff members.

Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU has well maintained 24 classrooms, several lecture halls, a theatre, library and 12 computer laboratories. The library has a reading room and several study areas for group study/work. Teaching venues are equipped with data projectors, whiteboards, and smart boards, while the computers in computer laboratories have programme specific software installed including SPSS. All students can access the network/internet using their credentials on the university-wide free WiFi service. There is evidence that the library resources are satisfactory for the BSMM programme, i.e., books, journals, databases. This includes forty-six databases covering business, management, and public relations. Besides the hardcopy books, there are 12 thousand electronic books and 2.5 million e-journal articles. The faculty, during the interviews, assured the Panel that they had appropriate resources to support the programme. While satisfied with the current resources, the students' interviews revealed a desire to move to the new University campus. The Panel understands from the follow-up discussions with the faculty that the University is addressing this item.

- There are several formal mechanisms in place for the maintenance of resources. For example, Initiative 5 of the new Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan aims to 'ensure high quality support services that enhance student experience and support personal and

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *20*

professional development' and has Quality Support Services as a performance indicator with an annual target of student satisfaction of 85% or above. Also, the Information and Communication Technology Centre ICTC maintains the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure, and ensures its adequacy.

- The virtual tour showed a well-equipped Health Clinic accommodated with a full-time medical professional who can handle minor health-related issues. In interviews, the Panel was informed that the clinic operated during regular office hours. An after-hours number was available if medical assistance was needed when the Health Clinic is closed. Extra safeguards have been put in place to address health and safety during Covid-19, including shields in offices, social distancing, staff rotation and home working, sanitising, wearing masks, promoting vaccinations, running workshops on topics related to Covid-19, and promoting physical health and fitness through online yoga and spinning classes. Additionally, there are various security measures to ensure the safety of those on campus, including cameras and security personnel. The Panel is satisfied with the maintenance and health and safety measures on campus.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The Management Information System (MIS) known as ADREG is comprehensive and provides the necessary tools to manage the BSMM programme needs. The system has the ability to generate various reports to inform decision-making. These ADREG reports include monitoring student performance and identifying students at risk of academic failure. It can also generate reports related to faculty load, faculty distribution, and financial planning. Additionally, ADREG can be used to generate reports related to the booking and utilization of venues. Moodle is AU's Learning Management System and is partially synced with ADREG. Moodle provides the eLearning functionality to faculty and students for running online courses and publishing resources and activities.

- The accuracy of transcripts and certificates are ensured through the use of the ADREG system which includes a dedicated graduation module. ADREG security features include authorized access rights to selected users and embossing of certificates with a unique serial number, a history of all prints, and an online approval of graduation from all parties concerned as clarified during interviews and shown in the samples of students' certificates. In addition, the ICTC Server has a Backup & Restore Procedure in case there is a server failure or breach. AU also has an Authentication of Certification Procedure that

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   21

governs the issuing of certificates. In interviews, students expressed their appreciation for the transparent and expeditious process in issuing the transcripts and certificates.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The Deanship of Student Affairs is primarily responsible for student support, through a range of activities and services including admission and registration; counselling; sports, cultural and social activities; complaints handling; accommodating students with special needs; and dissemination of information. The organogram of the Deanship documents the primary linkages between the Dean of Student affairs and other entities including the Students Activities and Service Directorate, the Admission and Registration Systems Support Unit, the Student Counselling Directorate, as well as the Professional Relations Directorate. This system of interlinkages allows an integrated student support. The Panel notes during the interviews that the students and alumni all commented positively, highlighting the support AU offers; this includes counselling services which are offered by the Student Counselling Directorate and the internship placements and career guidance, which are overseen by the Dean of Student Affairs. They were also satisfied with the support provided in terms of library, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources.

- On admission, the Dean of Student Affairs holds an orientation day every semester. Then a specific College orientation day covering programme related matters is conducted to provide academic information about the BSMM programme. The Academic Advising Policy and Procedure clarifies that newly admitted students, including those transferring from other institutions are assigned to an academic advisor, who they are expected to meet with, at least once a semester to discuss their academic progress. Students at risk are identified through the ADREG system, which notifies the academic adviser, requiring more regular meetings and monitoring of the student. At-risk students could also receive additional support such as extra teaching and learning sessions or counselling for non-academic problems. During the meetings with their academic advisors, students discuss their study plan, grades, and progress to ensure that ILOs are met and graduate attributes are achieved. A documentation of such meetings is registered in the ADREG system.

- According to the statistical information on the College, 13 of the 31 academic staff and one of the eight administrative staff listed are female. Amongst students, the gender balance in the 2020-2021 academic year was 118 males to 103 females. In 2021, AU won 3rd place in 'Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ebrahim Al Khalifa Award for the Advancement of Bahraini Women'. In addition, AU was listed on United Nations Platform

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   22

for SDG5 related to Gender Equality considering its initiatives for Women's Needs. The Panel appreciated AU's arrangements to cater for women's needs which led to being awarded by several entities.

- During the interviews, more details were provided to the Panel concerning the support offered for students with special needs. An ad hoc Special Needs Committee was convened to identify the unique requirements of newly admitted students with special needs and provide them with the necessary support during their study time, including meeting and welcoming them on arrival. Mobility needs are addressed by providing access to underground parking and lifts and scheduling their classes in accessible venues. Lecturers are also informed if there are students with special needs in their class. The Panel was given an example of a student who was given extra time to write examinations due to anxiety. During the interviews, it was explained to the Panel that this was done after obtaining a medical report and captured on ADREG for future reference.

- The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) regularly surveys students and other AU stakeholders, e.g., External Advisory Board, employers and alumni. During the virtual site visit interviews with AU stakeholders, they confirmed that they have all participated in multiple surveys and they felt that AU valued their feedback. For example, students had requested more industry related certification, and the College had been responsive.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 23

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Standard *3*

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

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Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The assessment policies are documented and elaborated in the AU Assessment Manual. Further assessment principles are described in the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project and the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship Programme. The different assessment types are clearly linked to the specific ILOs, as it is indicated in the ILOs achievement and the verification reports. This encompasses take home assignments (e.g., the Quantitative Analysis for Business (MAGT310) course), mini cases, group presentations (e.g., the Ethics and Professional Practice in Business (ETHC391) course), research based projects (e.g., the Quality Management (MAGT414) course) or case studies and short answer questions (e.g., the Marketing Strategy (MAKT421) course) with an adequate adjustment to the course contents and goals. In the interviews, it was also confirmed that the assessments cover the range of analytical and critical skills. The Panel considers the assessment methods as appropriate to the expected academic standards.

- The quality and efficiency of the assessment are monitored by the internal moderation process and the external assessors. The linkage between CILOs and assessments are assured by the internal and external verification and moderation processes. The outcome is documented in the ILOs achievement report, which represents a detailed assessment overview and shows adequate achievements in the CILO attainment charts. It was confirmed during the interviews that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that the CILOs are aligned with the PILOs and graduate attributes. The Panel is satisfied with the clear lines of mapping between CILOs, PILOs and graduate attributes.

- The process of monitoring, implementing, and improving is mainly at the level of the College Council, where this is discussed and documented. An example is the change in the textbook of the Marketing Strategy (MAKT421) course, in response to an external assessor's comment to include more recent case studies. The Department also plays a role, together with the College Council, in monitoring the implementation of the assessment policies and improving the related processes. The internal and external verification and

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   24

moderation is monitored by the TLAC together with the CAQA. The interviews clearly indicate that the assessment policies and procedures are well disseminated, internalized and practiced by the faculty members.

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

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

Judgment: Partially Addressed

- Academic integrity is specified in the AU Assessment Manual, and reflected in the Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy. This is also defined and explained in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Projects. The dissemination of the related policy and procedures takes place in the student orientation and in the distribution of the guidelines for supervision of undergraduate projects and dissertation manuscripts. Furthermore, some course syllabi include a link to the university website for academic integrity (e.g., the Quality Management (MAGT414) course). The Panel advises the College to ensure that all course syllabi include similar information in relation to academic integrity. According to the Assessment Manual, the University is focused on preventing six types of misconduct: plagiarism; data falsification; use of third-parties (tacit personation) or cheat-ware sites; free-riding collusion; recycling collusion; and active personation. The academic integrity is further developed in the Research Ethics Framework which refers to research involving human-related data undertaken by any staff members and students. The Academic Research and Intellectual Contribution Committee is responsible for ensuring the adherence of research to the core principles and related specifications. The Panel observed, in the interviews, that faculty and students are fully aware of the procedures of detecting plagiarism and dealing with academic misconduct.

- To check cases of plagiarism, AU is using Turnitin, which is applied for submitted assignments through Moodle. In the AU's Assessment Manual, it is stated, that similarity rate is 30% for all undergraduate assessments. The responsible person to monitor plagiarism is the course instructor, and the supervisor of the final project. The Panel observed inconsistencies in some undergraduate courses such as Quantitative Analysis for Business (MAGT 310) and Digital and Social Media Marketing (MAKT 423), which specify the similarity threshold as 15% instead of the targeted 30% for undergraduate assessments. The Panel recommends that the College should adhere to the similarity percentage in AU's Assessment Manual when marking students' work.

- Policies for academic misconduct describe a clear procedure for dealing with existing cases, based on the type and category. This involves a report to the Dean of Student Affairs

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *25*

and a hearing before the Disciplinary Committee of the University in case of repeated offenses. However, the Panel learned in the interviews, that there has been no 'major' case for any academic misconduct from BSMM students. The only documentation submitted was a first warning letter to a student for cheating in an examination. But even if this is the case, it is necessary to document minor cases, so as to be aware of repeated behavioral patterns. The Panel, therefore, recommends that AU should introduce a register of minor incidents of students' academic misconduct.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU has formal and appropriate procedures for the internal moderation of assessments. During the interviews, it was explained to the Panel that moderation of assessments weighted 20% or above occurs at the pre-assessment stage to verify the ILO alignments, and the appropriateness of the tasks. Three samples of assignments with high, average, low grades are reviewed at the post-assessment stage to verify the fairness and accuracy of the grading. Samples of internal verification/ moderation forms were provided to the Panel. The responsible entity to organize the process is the Internal Verification/Moderation Committee, which is formed every semester. The criteria for selecting the members of the Internal Verification/Moderation Committee are published and set out in the Assessment Manual. This committee consists of instructors and course verifiers who must have the requisite expertise in the courses as clarified during the interviews. The Chairperson of the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems monitors the moderation process and evaluates its effectiveness, together with CAQA and TLAC. The Panel is satisfied with the internal moderation process.

- The Dean and CAQA together with TLAC are responsible for the management of the external moderation of assessments. External moderation is used for the course syllabi, major pieces of course work, final examinations and grade distributions to ensure the application of appropriate standards in courses. The selection criteria for external moderators are clearly defined and include academic degree requirements, knowledge, experience and competency in the relevant subjects. Additionally, exclusion criteria are defined, which mainly focus on possible conflicts of interest. The Panel was provided with some examples of changes in assessments and courses based on the feedback received from external moderators (e.g., adding more current case studies in the Quality Management (MAGT414) course). During the interviews the Panel was informed that the TLAC monitors the implementation of the external moderation process and evaluates its effectiveness, together with the Dean and CAQA.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   26

Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning

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

Judgment: Addressed

- Since the academic year 2017-2018, AU has included an internship (INTR400) as a mandatory course requirement for all Marketing & Management students. The ILOs of the internship course are mapped against the PILOs and show a strong contribution to the overall achievement of the programme's aims and graduate attributes. Students can register in this course when they have completed at least 90 credit hours and have a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0. The internship requires at least 240 working hours. The Internship Office supports the students in finding appropriate positions and all the internship files, which include reports and completed evaluation forms are available on the ADREG system. The procedures and structure of the internship course are explained in detail in the Internship Programme Guidelines document, which describes the responsibilities of the Dean, academic supervisors, site supervisors and students. This refers to finding an internship position, the assessment requirements, as well as to the work-related responsibilities and tasks. The assigned academic supervisors and the site supervisors are collectively responsible for the supervision and evaluations that are required during the internship period. The Panel is satisfied with the internship guidelines and procedures which describe clearly how internships are managed and ensure an equivalent experience amongst students.

- The assessment of the internship course is based on the evaluation of the academic and the site supervisor and includes bimonthly reports, and a final report as clarified in the SER. The site supervisors are responsible for 50% of the grade through their mid and final evaluations. The rest of the assessment is divided up between two bi-monthly reports by the students (each 10%) and a student final report (30%). In the interviews, the Panel clarified that the academic supervisors are responsible for the grading of the student's bi-monthly and final reports, meaning that the academic supervisors effectively are responsible for awarding 50% of the grade.

- Evaluating the effectiveness of the internship programme is based on a survey filled out by the site supervisors. This also includes a direct measurement of the PILO achievements. The Panel notes that in the interviews the involved work site employers were very satisfied with the students, as well as with the relevant information from the academic supervisors and the continuous involvement of the academic supervisors with the internship students.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 27

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project define the goals of the capstone project as a means to 'provide students with an opportunity (a) to obtain practical experience in defining a research problem in the field, and designing and conducting the research project accordingly; (b) to demonstrate specialization-specific as well as general skills of vocational merit that enhances future employability prospects, and (c) to develop skills in teamwork and leadership …'. In the mapping of the capstone projects (MAGT/ MAKT 499), it is indicated that it contributes to all PILOs. The achievement of the CILOs in MAGT/MAKT 499 is measured with a CILO achievement matrix.

- The Undergraduate Project Guidelines document defines in detail the roles of the Chairperson of the Department, CAQA, administrators, supervisors, internal examiners, and students. The document is made available on the university's website. The students are required to develop a project proposal in the prerequisite course (Research Methods in Business & Finance (BFRM 498)), which is submitted to the Chairperson of the Department, who designates a supervisor for the project. The Chairperson is additionally responsible for appointing an examination committee (two internal examiners and a supervisor) and approving final grades. The supervisor (who has to have at least 3 years of teaching experience at university level and must be active in research) is responsible for guiding the students in the project, monitoring their progress and being involved in the examination and evaluation. The College Office Administrator's responsibilities is mainly based on organizing the student files into a Supervision of Undergraduate Project Summary Report. This report then goes to the CAQA which monitors and evaluates the implementation of the established procedures. In the interviews, the Panel noted the awareness of the procedures by faculty and students.

- The chosen project topics, as documented in provided evidence, show a good and appropriate range of conceptually relevant themes (e.g., services capes, customer retention, employee/customer satisfaction) and more current socially relevant themes (e.g., social media, influencers, green values, corporate responsibility or value-based movements). The evaluation is based on a written report (70%), and an oral presentation (30%). The final grade is then the average grade of the three members of the examination committee and is based on clearly defined rubrics for the oral and written parts. If the

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *28*

three members are diverging in their grades by more than 20%, the Chairperson of the Department is then responsible for moderating the final grade.

- The monitoring and review of the students' progress is executed by the supervisors and documented in the ADREG system. The Chairperson of the Department monitors the supervision process. The CAQA also monitors and evaluates compliance with all the documentation requirements. Furthermore, the TLAC is periodically reviewing the undergraduate project guidelines. The last changes from the version 4 to 5 of the guidelines in 2021 was based on feedback from faculty, Chairpersons and Deans, and was focussed on improving the CILOs evaluation process and updating the related forms.

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel confirms that the level of students' achievements is appropriate and comparable to equivalent programmes. This is based on reviewing the students' assessed work, from course assignments to final projects and interviews with the students, faculty and external examiners. The capstone projects provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to create and innovate.

- The year-on-year progression and cohort analysis for the last three academic years shows that the ratios of admitted students to successful graduates are consonant with those on equivalent programmes. It also shows a recent retention rate of 83% for the last academic year 2020-2021 and a downward trend in the number of admitted students for the BSMM programme. This can be due to the COVID-19 but the Panel advises AU to monitor and investigate this issue.

- The Directorate of Professional Relations is responsible for monitoring the graduate destinations. In interviews, the Panel learned from students that those who had not yet secured employment, were regularly contacted by the University and provided with information on job vacancies. As per the Alumni Report, graduate destinations data included 7.21% entrepreneurs, 80.77% employed in their specialization fields, 5.77% employed in other fields and 6.25% unemployed. The Panel appreciates the positive graduation outcomes, and also the continuous engagement with alumni to ensure their successful employment.

- The satisfaction of employers with the programme graduates is documented by the CME and turns out to be positive. The graduate achievements are also systematically measured through a College External Advisory Board survey with a high satisfaction rate. The Panel

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   29

also notes the positive feedback in the interviews from the Advisory Board and external stakeholders such as external examiners and internship providers/employers.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 30

Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

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

Judgment: Addressed

- Quality assurance is viewed as a strategic priority and is included as one of the strategic objectives of AU. A Quality Assurance Manual, currently in its fourth version, sets out the University's policies and procedures related to quality assurance management. Furthermore, it incorporates the regulations and requirements for accreditation. From interviews, the Panel learned that the latest version of the Manual included revisions and additions to the external reviewer feedback process, NQF related information, the procedure for remapping and the revalidation of qualifications, a framework for cross-border programmes and guidelines for research oversight. This latest draft of this Manual was introduced to both administrative and academic staff through a series of workshops and is made available on SharePoint. Furthermore, new staff are provided with a Staff Handbook which contains information on quality management. The Ahlia Centre for Information and Documentation (ACID) is responsible for the storage and distribution of all documentation related to quality management.

- The CAQA in collaboration with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) and the TLAC are primarily responsible for developing and implementing AU Quality Management System (QMS) and all hold meetings on a regular basis. In interviews, the Panel was informed that the CAQA was responsible for updating policies and procedures related to accreditation, ensuring that the policies and procedures were applied consistently, training staff and faculty on these policies and procedures, and reporting on quality assurance related activities to the TLAC and to the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Department Council is responsible for implementing quality management within the Department and is required to prepare a report each semester on the application and status of quality assurance standards within the Department. According to the SER, the Department Council submits these reports to the College

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *31*

Council for consideration. These reports are also considered by the TLAC as well as the AQAC before being tabled at the university council meetings.

- The Panel was informed in interviews that all policies and procedures related to quality assurance are available on the website and stored on the SharePoint. Regular workshops are held for faculty on quality assurance related matters, and events are held to provide the other stakeholders with recent updates. Part-time and newly appointed staff receive an induction by the Chairperson of the Department and are trained in the CAQA policy and procedures. During the interviews, the Panel notes that administrative and academic staff were aware of the QMS requirements and how their work was influenced by quality management considerations.

- AU QMS is monitored by CAQA in coordination with the AQAC and TLAC. In interviews, the Panel was informed that the CME was responsible for conducting a range of surveys amongst various stakeholder groupings (including current students, alumni, and employers), analyzing the data and compiling reports. Several improvements have been noted such as aligning the QMS to United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 pertaining to Quality Education.

Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The organizational chart of the College of Business and Finance is designed according to the subject disciplines and programmes offered within the College. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that academic staff are not solely dedicated to a single Department/directorate or programme, but lecture across programmes and levels.

- The Panel was able to confirm during the interviews that there are clear reporting lines and terms of reference for the different committees and management posts. The Panel was informed that the BSMM Coordinator reports to the Chairperson of the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems who in turn reports directly to the Dean of the College on matters related to the BSMM programme. The University bylaws document sets out the terms of reference for the College and Department Councils. These terms of reference clearly set out the responsibilities for academic matters pertaining to the College and the Department. The bylaws also clearly differentiate responsibilities between University Council which is responsibility for the institution as a whole, while Colleges assume responsibility for College-wide matters and Departments for departmental-level matters. At the institutional level, TLAC is chaired by the Vice

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021 32

President for Academic Affairs and monitors and oversees academic matters in the University, while the AQAC is chaired by the President and has oversight of administrative operations.

- The roles of the College Dean and Department Chairpersons are clearly stipulated in the bylaws. 'The Dean is responsible for managing all affairs of his/her College in accordance with regulations, while 'the Chairperson of an Academic Department is responsible for managing all the academic, administrative and student's affairs that falls within the ambit of his/her department.' According to the bylaws, the Department Council must meet at least monthly, as should the College Councils. Sample of meeting minutes of the College and Department suggest that these meetings have, and still do, take place regularly. The Panel appreciates the institution's leadership efforts in instilling a culture that encourages the maintaining of academic standards.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The programme undergoes a quality assurance review at the end of each semester and a report is prepared. This procedure is a recent development, implemented for the first time in the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year and is primarily focused on the course level, resulting in minor changes such as revising the prescribed textbooks or introducing new software. There is also an annual review of the BSMM programme conducted by the Department Council, the report of which is forwarded to the College Council for discussion, as well as to the TLAC. It also deals with some changes at the course level, such as revising course content, structure and assessment methods, and some changes made in light of the review may result in minor improvements to the programme such as revised course prerequisites or changes to course contents, provided they do not affect the programme structure as clarified in interviews. The CAQA reviews the annual reports and may recommend actions to be taken by the Department and College Councils through the TLAC.

- In accordance with the programme review framework and the Process for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes, periodic programme reviews are conducted every three years and may lead to major changes to programmes. Any major changes that are proposed are reviewed by AU Standing Curriculum Committee and thereafter tabled at a University Council meeting for final approval as clarified in interviews. The most recent periodic review was conducted in 2020 and led to the

introduction of a major elective in Strategic Leadership and Change Management and a core course in Digital Marketing and Social Media. When conducting this review, teams were formed from staff and faculty members, and were responsible for scoping job market needs, conducting surveys and undertaking desktop research. Recommendations for curriculum changes are developed into an action plan which ought to be approved by the Department Council and the College Council; and monitored by the CAQA.

- For the Periodic Programme Review, feedback is obtained from internal and external sources, including the external programme assessors, the College External Advisory Board, students, alumni and employers of graduates. The Quality Periodic Programme Reviews and Utilization of Feedback Procedure ensures that actions are identified and developed into an action plan by the Department Council and approved by the College Council and monitored by the CAQA as clarified in interviews. The Panel was informed in interviews that an external reviewer was also appointed to ensure that appropriate changes were made. In addition, given that quality assurance was built into the operational plan this served as a further mechanism to monitor implementation.

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU has a Benchmarking Policy covering three types of benchmarking, namely comparative benchmarking against peer institutions, good practice benchmarking against regulatory requirements and professional standards, and internal benchmarking. According to the Policy, benchmarking usually takes the form of a desktop survey and the Department has conducted desktop analysis/search to compare the BSMM programme with three local institutions and one regional, and three international institutions. However, the Panel is of the view that formal agreements with other institutions can facilitate formal comparative benchmarking exercises. Therefore, the Panel suggests that AU consider this matter. Benchmarking outcomes are utilized to inform decision making.

- A Revised Study Plan of the BSMM is offered as evidence of the outcomes of a periodic review that included a desktop comparison with other programmes. The plan was discussed at Advisory Board meetings, followed by a Curriculum Committee meeting and Department Council meeting, and finally approved by the University Council.

- The CME assumes responsibility for administering regular university and programme surveys amongst the university's internal and external stakeholders and collating the

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021
34

feedback. These surveys are administered amongst students, alumni, employers, and advisory board members, amongst others. The various surveys are collected and analyzed by the CME and then forwarded to the Advisory Board, Department Council and College Council to review and for decision making purposes.

- The operational plan serves as the mechanism to implement the recommended improvements. Furthermore, the Advisory Board is updated about the achieved progress at their meetings. The outcomes of changes made are communicated to stakeholders through classroom announcements and discussions with students, and to alumni and employers at annual alumni gatherings. In addition, online events have recently been held to provide feedback to stakeholders.

- According to the SER, the College Advisory Board has reviewed the modifications made to the BSMM programme and was satisfied. From interviews the Panel learned that members of the Advisory Board were contacted frequently by AU, often outside of formal Advisory Board meetings, to get their opinion on a range of topics, including curriculum changes, and to inform them when the changes recommended had been implemented. Students were also aware of the changes being made to the programme and were generally satisfied with the changes as confirmed during interviews.

Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs

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

Judgment: Addressed

- A College External Advisory Board has been constituted to provide guidance and support on issues related to the College and its programmes, including 'identifying academic programmes and promoting revision of current programmes'. Its members are drawn from employers, industrial and professional experts in the field, and alumni. Regular meetings are held and this provides the opportunity for the members of the College External Advisory Board to comment on programme reviews and it is evident from the provided minutes of meetings. The Panel appreciates the active involvement of Advisory Board Members in enhancing the programme and ensure its relevance to market needs.

- AU has a policy for Needs Assessment and Analysis. In accordance with this policy, a market needs assessment for the BSMM programme has been conducted. This assessment relied on dated studies such as the Allen report, combined with more recent economic studies, the WEF Future of Jobs Survey, and an analysis of current job vacancies to analyse the gap in employment in specialization areas related to the BSMM and to identify career

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *35*

pathways that are in demand. From interviews, the Panel notes that the Department Council and College Council are responsible for ensuring that regular reviews are conducted and guide the development, review and closure of any academic programme as clarified in the SER.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021   *36*

V. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the virtual interviews and documentation made available during the virtual review, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020*:

There is Confidence in the Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing offered by the College of Business and Finance at Ahlia University (AU)

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

1. The existence of an integrated planning framework from strategic to programme level.

2. The arrangements to cater for women's needs which led to being awarded by several entities.

3. The positive graduation outcomes, and also the continuous engagement with alumni to ensure their successful employment.

4. The institution's leadership efforts in instilling a culture that encourages the maintaining of academic standards.

5. The active involvement of Advisory Board Members in enhancing the programme and ensure its relevance to market needs.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that Ahlia University and or the College of Business and Finance should:

1. **Update** the Memorandum of Academic Cooperation with Brunel University, United Kingdom, so that it accurately reflects the current set of arrangements.

2. **Revise** the study plan to include more courses related to labour market needs such as putting Advertising & Promotions Management course as a core course; and the Integrated Marketing Communication course and Product & Brand Management course to be included as elective courses. In addition to putting Sales Management course as an elective course rather than a core course.

3. **Review** and **update** the prescribed textbooks and reading materials for all courses.

4. **Revise** the workload allocation by considering community engagement and other extra-curricular activities as part of it.

5. **Ensure** that the academic staff adhere to the similarity percentage in Ahlia University Assessment Manual when marking students work.

6. **Introduce** a register of minor incidents of students' academic misconduct.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews–Ahlia University– College of Business and Finance– Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing – 21-24 November 2021					*38*