Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programme Review Report

Bahrain Polytechnic
Faculty of Business and Logistics
Bachelor of Business (BBUS)
Kingdom of Bahrain

Site Visit Date: 6-8 December 2021

HA040-C3-R047

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Acronyms

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
APR	Academic Programme Review
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
BAFI	Banking and Finance
BBUS	Bachelor of Business
BILM	Bachelor of International Logistics Management
BP	Bahrain Polytechnic
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CAG	Curriculum Advisory Group
CD	Course Descriptor
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
CEC	Career and Employment Centre
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CIMA	Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CTTL	Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DMA	Digital Marketing Association
ECCTIS	Education Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service
FOBL	Faculty of Business and Logistics
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HRM	Human Resources Management

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ICAEW	Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
ICTS	Information and Communication Technology Services Directorate
IT	Information Technology
LLC	Library and Learning Centre
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAD	Programme Approval Document
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
PC	Programme Committee
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
PjBL	Project-Based Learning
PPjBL	Problem and Project Based Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMAP	Quality, Measurements and Analysis and Planning Unit
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SMT	Senior Management Team
T&L	Teaching & Learning
TTH	Timetabled teaching hours
WPT	Widening Participation Team

I. Introduction

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

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

The Cycle 2 APR Review Framework is based on four main Standards and 21 Indicators, which form the basis 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	

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.

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Bahrain Polytechnic
College/ Department*	Faculty of Business and Logistics School of Business
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Business Bachelor of Business (Accounting Major) Bachelor of Business (Banking and Finance Major) Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management Major) Bachelor of Business (Management Major) Bachelor of Business (Marketing Major) Bachelor of Business (Double Major)
Qualification Approval Number	-
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Validation Date
Number of Units*	Bachelor of Business .... 33 Bachelor of Business (Accounting Major) .... 34 Bachelor of Business (Banking and Finance Major) .... 34 Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management Major) .. 32 Bachelor of Business (Management Major) .... 34 Bachelor of Business (Marketing Major) .... 33 Bachelor of Business (Double Major) 36
NQF Credit	Single Major: 480 credits Double Major: 540 credits
Programme Aims*	The overall aim of the Bachelor of Business is to develop broad-based business graduates with specialist knowledge and skills at the international forefront of business practice that meet the requirements of the Bahrain and the wider GCC region. This aim is congruent with

	the human capital development aspirations outlined in Economic Vision 2030.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	General/Common Bachelor of Business Outcomes ▪ Demonstrate a detailed knowledge of core business concepts and a broad understanding of the changing business environment ▪ Evaluate business perspectives and adapt strategies to deal with varied (defined and some undefined) business contexts ▪ Practice as a professional using 21st century skills Bachelor of Business (Accounting) Outcomes ▪ Adapt core theories in financial accounting and reporting, managerial accounting, auditing, taxation, and financial management to specific contexts ▪ Apply the knowledge of accounting appropriately within any relevant context ▪ Produce financial or managerial accounting information that complies with the relevant internal or external frameworks ▪ Produce, analyse, evaluate and present accounting information using standard and specialised computer applications ▪ Provide accounting information to assist in the decision-making processes of a business Bachelor of Business (Banking & Finance) Outcomes ▪ Solve organizational financial challenges using portfolio management theories ▪ Manage organizations' funds effectively through knowledge of the key financial factors and the methods of managing funds ▪ Apply the fundamentals of circulation of money, credit and investment in order to ensure appropriate organizational growth ▪ Contend with financial securities transactions with local, regional and international frameworks ▪ Apply government and economic policies and comply with financial parameters set by the regulators Bachelor of Business (Marketing) Outcomes

▪ Demonstrate proficiency in the latest marketing and digital methods for understanding customer behaviour and delivering customer satisfaction in B2B or B2C market contexts ▪ Demonstrate a critical understanding of the role of marketing in a company and explore the relationship between marketing and other organizational functions ▪ Develop marketing plans and strategies to meet the needs of the Bahrain business environment ▪ Build and execute an integrated marketing communications campaign using online and offline media ▪ Apply marketing research concepts from design, analysis through to report generation and presentation to justify making business decisions Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management) Outcomes ▪ Demonstrate competence as a developing HR professional, guided by moral, ethical and legal principles as well as a critical awareness of contemporary and emerging issues at the forefront of HRM ▪ Use specialist HR skills to develop strategic initiatives that increase organisational effectiveness ▪ Demonstrate appropriate use of workplace skills, technology and techniques for evaluation and interpretation of business data in order to solve problems and support organisational decision making ▪ Balance business needs with employee needs at operational and strategic levels in a diverse range of evolving scenarios and situations ▪ Develop the cognitive abilities of independent learning, critical evaluation, analysis and synthesis and demonstrate their competence as self-directed, reflective learners who are able to continuously appraise their personal capability and development towards personal, career and academic goals. Bachelor of Business (Management) Outcomes

	- Recommend and utilise management strategies that lead to the ability to formulate, implement and evaluate local, regional and international business planning through applying standard investigative research methods - Manage interaction in organisations to aid decision making and the achievement of tasks thereby motivating others to perform well and to lead change effectively - Develop positive stakeholder relations, both internal and external, with a strong orientation to meeting client needs in an innovative and enterprising way to solve client problems or deal appropriately with complex situations - Create and design strategies to support the successful and sustainable growth of new and existing enterprises - Work with various organisations in advisory roles, as business partners, project managers or in general management Bachelor of Business (Double Major) Outcomes The outcomes are a combination of those of the two majors a student is enrolled in

*   Mandatory fields

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	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	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	Partially 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	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Addressed

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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	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Addressed

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: *Partially Addressed*

- The Programme Approval Policy of the Bachelor of Business (BBUS) outlines the procedure for developing and approving programmes at the Bahrain Polytechnic (BP). The Policy covers the approvals for new programmes and courses, and changes to current programmes and courses, in addition to the placement of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). To ensure the programme is relevant and fit for purpose, the policy requires that feasibility studies and consultations with external stakeholders to be undertaken. The BBUS programme was introduced in 2009, and pre-dates the Programme Approval Policy. However, the Policy has been applied to recent changes made to the BBUS programme and curriculum, and these are documented in the comprehensive Programme Approval Documents (PADs) for each of the majors. The PADs contain information which clearly demonstrates the evidence of a need for the programme, the programme's strategic alignment with BP's mission and Bahrain's Vision 2030, and its compliance with existing regulations stipulated by the BQA, Higher Education Council (HEC) and NQF. Some majors (tracks) in the programme also have international recognition by professional bodies.

- The Faculty of Business and Logistics (FOBL) maintains a Risk Register which lists four key risks related to the BBUS programme. These are related to staff shortages, lack of specialist tutors in each major, funding for securing professional accreditation and recognition, and engagement with alumni. The risks identified have a direct bearing on the quality, delivery and academic standards of the programme because they are related to the availability of human resources and the need for external recognition. The risks are reviewed in the BBUS Programme Committee and Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings as a standing agenda item, and also discussed at the Faculty Board and presented

to the Academic Board. From interviews with staff members and various meeting minutes, the Panel noted that there is a strong awareness of the risks facing the programme and that efforts are being made to mitigate these. The risks related to staff shortages are being addressed together with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and new faculty members are being appointed when positions become available, although this remains an area of concern (see Indicator 2.2). Funding has also been secured to obtain professional recognition of the first two years of the BBUS programme through the Education Counselling and Credit Transfer Information Service (ECCTIS) in the United Kingdom.

- The BBUS programme was mapped to the NQF using a process involving Mapping Scorecards and detailed Placement applications. The BBUS Management and Marketing majors were placed on the NQF in 2016, while the Accounting, Human Resources Management (HRM) and Banking and Finance (BAFI) majors followed in 2017. A step-by-step procedure for placing a programme on the NQF is outlined in the Programme Approval Policy and was followed to achieve the NQF Placement. However, a Placement decision for the double major is not yet available and, accordingly, the Panel advises the FOBL to take the steps necessary for achieving such placement.

- The title of the programme is 'Bachelor of Business'. It is concise and indicative of the qualification's type and content at level eight of the NQF. At the end of the second year, students can select one of the five majors available (Accounting, BAFI, HRM, Management or Marketing). A double major is also possible, by combining any two majors. Students who do not select a major can complete an 'unendorsed' general BBUS, although the Panel was informed that this was not common, which was supported by the enrollment numbers provided to the Panel. The Panel viewed samples of the degree certificates which showed the programme title as, for example, 'Bachelor of Business (Accounting Major)'. However, the NQF Placement Decisions have different titles for the majors, with the Marketing and Management majors titled 'Bachelor of Business (Management Major)' and 'Bachelor of Business (Marketing Major)', while the other majors do not have the word 'Major' appearing in the title. The programme titles on the BP website and the PADs also do not contain the word 'Major'. The BBUS Management major does not appear on the BP website at all. Furthermore, the PADs refer to the programme as 'Bachelor of Business. As a result, the Panel recommends that BP should ensure that the BBUS programme title is accurately and consistently documented in all relevant institutional documentation and on the website. The Panel also urges BP to proofread the PADs to remove minor errors in the formatting and syntax, and to ensure consistency in the PADs for all of the BBUS majors, including the double major.

- The BBUS programme has a single 'qualification aim' stated in the general BBUS PAD, which is to 'to develop broad-based business graduates with specialist knowledge and skills at the international forefront of business practice that meet the requirements of Bahrain and the wider GCC region. This aim is congruent with the human capital

development aspirations outlined in Economic Vision 2030'. The same aim has been replicated in the PAD for the double major programme, however, the PADs for the single majors have different qualification aims which are discipline-focused and not linked to the BBUS aim. The Panel requested additional information about the programme aims and was referred to the university website, which lists a set of six skills-focused programme aims related to graduate outcomes and does not refer to the aims in the PADs. The Panel also sought evidence of how programme aims are reviewed in consultation with stakeholders and was provided with the Curriculum Advisory Group (CAG) meeting summary report in response. In interviews, the Panel was informed that the feedback from the CAG is used to review and revise programme aims, with discussions taking place within the Programme Committee (PC), however no references were made to the Review, Evaluation and Implementation policy being followed. The Panel recommends that BP should regularly review and revise the BBUS programme aims in consultation with relevant stakeholders based on the Review, Evaluation and Implementation policy, and ensure that the programme aims are consistently recorded in all institutional documentation and on the website.

- The general BBUS programme aim refers to the Economic Vision 2030 of Bahrain, while the aims of the majors include references to 'work-ready graduates' with employability skills to support the economic needs of Bahrain. This is consistent with BP's mission and strategic goals to create 'professional and enterprising graduates with 21st century skills'. Every BBUS PAD contains a section detailing how the programme meets and aligns with the strategic priorities of BP, and clearly explains how it contributes to the achievement of BP's missions and strategic goals.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- In lieu of graduate attributes, BP has defined eight 'Employability Skills' at the institutional level, including communication, teamwork, problem solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, and learning and technology, which all students are expected to have when they graduate. These skills have been embedded within the BBUS programme using competency mapping in the PADs, which links every Programme Intended Learning Outcome (PILO) to three or more employability skills.

- The BBUS programme has three PILOs, while the majors have the same three PILOs and additional PILOs each, which are specific to the major. For the double major, the PILOs are a combination of the PILOs for the two majors selected, and students have to achieve a total of 13 PILOs. The PILOs are clearly stated and set at an appropriate level, with students required to 'apply', 'solve', 'manage', 'build' and 'recommend', which is consistent with a bachelor's degree. There is only one programme aim so there is no documented linking or mapping of the PILOs in the PAD since all of the PILOs are related to the aim.

- BP also offers a Diploma in Business as an exit qualification at the end of the second year for students who do not wish to complete the BBUS or do not meet the progression requirements to continue their studies. The Panel expressed concern over the fact that the PILOs of the Diploma are identical to those for the general BBUS programme, with no differentiation between the two levels of study. The Panel was informed in interviews that the differentiation is implied, with students completing a Diploma achieving the PILOs at a 'lower level' than the Bachelor level students, however, this was not evident in the wording of the PILOs or the way in which they are assessed. The Panel, therefore, recommends that BP should review and revise the general BBUS and Diploma PILOs to ensure there is an appropriate distinction between them, which reflects the different NQF levels of the two qualifications.

- The PILOs are appropriately written, with a strong emphasis on applied skills, which is in line with BP's mission to produce work-ready graduates. The PILOs are mapped to BP's employability skills. The Course Descriptors (CDs) for each course include a mapping of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) to the PILOs, and the achievement of each CILO is measured using a range of practical assessments. This mapping of assessments to CILOs, and CILOs to PILOs ensures that the achievement of PILOs can be measured. The BBUS programme and majors were placed on the NQF in 2016 and 2017, and thus currently meet all of the NQF requirements. In the past, external quality assurance and moderation of the programme was undertaken by Maastricht University in the Netherlands, however, according to interviews, this has been discontinued, and a more recent local benchmarking activity was undertaken in October 2020 with Ahlia University. The Panel notes, however, that benchmarking the PILOs was not part of this activity. There is evidence of international benchmarking of PILOs on the Accounting major, through professional recognition and exemptions from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). A more comprehensive benchmarking approach is needed to ensure that PILOs meet international norms, as recommended later in this report under Indicator 4.4.

- The CILOs for each course are clearly stated in the CD and mapped to NQF sub-strands. They are generally appropriate for the level of the courses and their contents, with first- and second-year introductory courses focusing on developing foundational knowledge

and generic skills in a broad range of business fields, and third- and fourth-year courses enhancing practical knowledge and applied skills in the discipline-specific area a student chooses to major in. An NQF Mapping Scorecard was developed for every course that was placed on the NQF, to ensure that it is appropriate. Limited benchmarking has been undertaken at the course-level, except for the Accounting major in which courses have been extensively benchmarked for equivalency with the ACCA and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). The Panel is of the view that a similar approach is needed in the other majors, as recommended later in this report under Indicator 4.4.

- The BBUS PADs and CDs contain a mapping of the courses and CILOs to PILOs, which was found to be appropriate. However, the mapping is incomplete because, as noted in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the mapping is currently limited to core courses only, and the CILOs of the elective courses are not mapped 'due to limitations with the curriculum management software (Akari)'. This gap is especially evident in the general BBUS programme, which has a large number of electives and optional courses since students do not study a specific major. The Panel finds that without an accurate and full mapping of CILOs to PILOs, it is not possible to determine how the CILOs in elective courses contribute to the achievement of PILOs, and this in turn hinders programme reviews. BP is aware of this limitation in its mapping but has not yet addressed it. The Panel, thus, recommends that BP should ensure that the CILOs of all the courses in the BBUS programme (core, optional and elective) are appropriately mapped and linked to PILOs, so as to facilitate the measurement of PILOs and effective programme reviews.

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: *Addressed*

- The Study Plans for all BBUS majors show a clear progression in terms of NQF levels and credits, with the first two years of study being common to all five majors and focusing on fundamental concepts in business, and the latter two years allowing students to specialise in their major area of study. To graduate, students must obtain 480 credits. All courses are 15 credits each, except for the Cooperative Industry Project which is 60 credits, with each credit equating to 10 hours of study. Full time students are expected to take four courses (60 credits) in each semester, and graduate within four years. Students who opt to do the BBUS double major require 540 credits and five years of study to graduate, while those who do not wish to continue can exit with a Diploma in Business after accumulating 240 credits. The credit hours are consistent with NQF expectations and student workloads are

suitable and sufficient with 150 hours of study per course in a semester, including contact hours and self-study.

- The pre-requisites for each course are specified in the PADs and individual CDs and ensure that students take courses in the correct order. The progression of courses is generally in line with international expectations and norms for similar programmes.

- Curriculum development at BP is 'subject to a structured and phased approvals process' involving the BBUS Programme Committee, Faculty Board, Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) and Academic Board. The Panel was informed that curriculum updates are initiated by the Programme Committee following end of semester course reviews or feedback from the CAG, and then sent to the Faculty Board for approval. Major curriculum changes must also be approved by the AQAC, which has the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) manager and two curriculum specialists as members, before being presented to the Academic Board. Evidence of this process being followed was available in meeting minutes and the changes made are documented in the PADs and the annual programme review reports. In 2020, the global pandemic and move to online teaching necessitated the implementation of a more agile process for curriculum and assessment changes and an Interim Approval Committee was established for this purpose which is still functional. As for benchmarking, a recent exercise with Ahlia University was undertaken at a programme level, but this was a 'performance comparison' and did not include curriculum benchmarking. Only the BBUS HRM major PAD provides evidence of curriculum benchmarking with course comparisons made to one local and four international universities. Thus, additional benchmarking of the BBUS curriculum is warranted to ensure that it remains current and relevant, as recommended later in this report under Indicator 4.4. Nevertheless, the BBUS Accounting and BBUS BAFI majors have professional recognition through the ACCA, CIMA and Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), which entails benchmarking of individual courses to obtain exemptions from professional examinations. Also, the BBUS Marketing major has been approved by the Digital Marketing Association (DMA). Previously it had recognition from the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) as a graduate gateway degree, but this has been discontinued. The Panel was informed that curriculum changes were made to integrate the requirements of these professional bodies and evidence of updates to specific courses was provided.

- BP's programmes and courses are designed to emphasize practical skills and knowledge in order to prepare work-ready graduates. An appropriate balance of theory and practice is assured by mapping the CILOs in each course with the NQF sub-strands (D1 to D5), and the PILOs to Performance Outcomes. The first two years of the BBUS programme focus on generic skills and theoretical knowledge, although the Teaching and Learning (T&L) strategy of Problem Based Learning (PBL) ensures an applied approach to the teaching of this knowledge. The major courses emphasise practical skills and domain

specific knowledge. The Cooperative Industry Project in the final semester is the primary means by which students are exposed to industry practices over an extended period of time. The 60-credit semester long project allows students to apply the domain knowledge and skills in a real-life setting. The Panel is satisfied that the mapping mechanisms and T&L approach at BP ensure an appropriate balance between theory and practice in the curriculum.

- The BBUS study plans indicate that there is appropriate depth and breadth of content. The progression of courses in the curriculum ensures that there is appropriate depth of study with students specializing in their major in the last two years of study. Breadth of the curriculum is achieved through the introductory courses in the first two years, as well as skills-based courses such as 'Applied Communication' (BU6008), 'Business Research Methods' (BU6011) and 'Project Management' (BU6012). An examination of the individual CDs shows that there is relevant coverage of topics in each course to support a broad and deep curriculum.

- Reading lists for each course are specified in the CDs and appropriate processes are in place to ensure that the learning resources are current and available in the library. A regular mapping of the library resources to the learning requirements of BP's programmes is conducted and students can evaluate these resources using the Course Survey Form. The Library Book Order form does not include a field to specify which programme a resource is being requested for, however, the Library Learning Resources Ordering guidelines include selection criteria to ensure that the resources being requested are consistent with course and programme needs. However, the Panel notes that there is no consistency in the number and type of references. Some courses have several recommended textbooks, while others have none, and the use of journal articles and other types of research references is limited. Hence, the Panel advises BP to introduce students to appropriate and relevant research references in more courses to build on the 'Business Research Methods' course (BU6011) and develop students' understanding of scientific research.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

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

Judgment: *Addressed*

- BP has a range of documents describing its philosophy and approach to T&L, including an institutional T&L Policy, the BP T&L Principles and a Project Based Learning (PBL) Plan, all of which are designed to underpin its Employability Framework and mission. PBL was introduced in 2010 and has now evolved into PBL through Project Based

Learning (PjBL), which BP calls Problem and Project Based Learning (PPjBL). This method relies on the use of practical artefacts, such as case studies, collaborative learning, and reflection and individual study to solve real-life problems. At BP, PBL is practiced primarily at the course level, although the PADs for each BBUS programme contain a description of the overall T&L philosophy, which is distilled into a range of diverse T&L strategies in each CD.

- The PPjBL and student-centred T&L philosophy is clearly stated in all the BBUS PADs and specific T&L methods based on this philosophy are listed in the CDs for each course. These methods are in line with BP's mission to produce work-ready graduates with 21st century skills by focusing on applied and practical knowledge, skills and competencies. The T&L methods are informed by the PBL model of teaching which was introduced to BP in 2010 by an international expert in the field and has since evolved into BP's own PPjBL model which has been integrated into course assessments, learning materials and reviews. This approach ensures that the use of the methods enables the attainment of the learning outcomes.

- A longitudinal study of PPjBL learning in the FOBL was undertaken by BP between 2019 and 2020 to verify the use of this type of learning in Business courses. A total of 51 BBUS courses had adopted the approach, with 27 using PBL and 24 using PPjBL. The approach was utilised across all BBUS majors, with the BBUS Marking and BBUS BAFI particularly strong adopters. The use of PPjBL is also reflected on by tutors in Course Review Reports and a recent Graduate Destinations Report highlights the use of PPjBL as a key success factor for graduates in their employment and career progression. The Panel appreciates the PPjBL approach to T&L on the BBUS programme, which is effectively embedded in the learning outcomes, curriculum and assessments, and supports the achievement of BP's mission to prepare work-ready graduates and promote lifelong learning.

- BP uses the Moodle virtual environment to support e-learning by providing a repository of learning materials and a platform for collaborative learning outside the classroom. During the current global pandemic, BP switched to 100% online teaching and made necessary adjustments to its teaching and assessment methods. Formal e-learning procedures designed to support this mode of delivery are currently being drafted based on standards for digital education set by Quality Matters, a global organisation which supports quality assurance of online T&L. BP recently became a member of Quality Matters and 30 BBUS faculty have completed the Quality Matters training. The Panel considers this a robust approach for ensuring e-learning is appropriately integrated into course delivery and supports the attainment of CILOs and PILOs.

- The T&L Policy advocates 'a shared philosophy of employability driven student-centred teaching and learning' as being 'crucial to enhancing the student experience, improving academic success, preparing […] students for employment, …'. This philosophy and

student participation in learning are manifested in several ways across the BBUS courses, including in the teaching methods adopted and the prescribed assessments, in addition to student participation in and exposure to industry practices and events which are managed in line with the Offsite and Workplace Learning Activities policy. CDs describe problem-based student-led learning as the expectation, and most CILOs are applied and practice-oriented allowing students to take responsibility for their learning. Independent learning on the BBUS programme gradually increases over the four years and culminates in a capstone self-directed final year industry project which exposes students to professional practices. BP cites the BBUS students' successes in external competitions and events as evidence of students' exposure to professional practice and lifelong learning.

- One of BP's employability skills is 'initiative and enterprise', and it has been embedded into the BBUS programme through the PILOs, as shown in the mapping of the skills to PILOs. BBUS students are exposed to research in 'Business Research Methods' (BU6011), which is a core course in Year Two, and in the final year Cooperative Industry Project which requires students to undertake industry-based research to make informed decisions and develop business solutions to real life problems. The Panel sought additional evidence of creativity and innovation being integrated into student learning on the BBUS programme and was provided with a list of additional courses where this takes place. In addition, the Panel was informed that the newly developed minor in entrepreneurship will further support the development of students' capabilities to create and innovate.

- The learning environment at BP promotes lifelong learning in the BBUS programme in several ways. Formal learning in the programme takes place during classes through PPjBL T&L methods described above, and also in formative and summative assessments which students are required to complete in each course. Non-formal learning opportunities are availed through BP sanctioned external competitions which BBUS students participate in, as well as exposure to industry practices by guest speakers and field trips. The Cooperative Industry Project which requires students to interact with industry professionals is also a key non-formal learning opportunity. Informal learning takes place outside the classroom and is facilitated by the Student Services which organise various social and recreational events for students and support student clubs to allow students to interact and engage in experiential 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.

Judgment: *Addressed*

- The Assessment and Moderation Policy outlines the principles of BP's assessment framework through a set of procedures and guidelines that apply to all assessments. Assessments are designed to measure the achievement of CILOs and are based on the PPjBL teaching approach. The range of assessments on the BBUS programme includes case studies, group projects, presentations, reports, student discussions, examinations, reflections and vivas, which are consistent with, and facilitate the achievement of, the PILOs, employability skills and BP's mission. The BBUS Programme Committee has oversight of assessments in the programme, to ensure that they are set at an appropriate level and comply with internal and external regulations, and this is evidenced in the committee's meeting minutes and additional evidence requested by the Panel. Assessments are also internally verified for validity and reliability and a sample of assessments from 10% of the programme courses was audited by the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) in 2019. Faculty are given training workshops on the assessment policy. The move to online delivery during the pandemic necessitated changes to the assessment structures in courses and an Interim Approval Committee was set up to ensure that the changes were in line with the institutional Assessment and Moderation Policy. Assessment guidelines were also developed for faculty to follow. Overall, the assessment framework for the BBUS programme is robust and consistently implemented.

- Staff and students can access the Assessment and Moderation Policy through BP's website, Moodle and the Sharepoint portal. Detailed information about assessments is also provided in the Staff Handbook. A combined assessment schedule is prepared for exam-based assessments every semester and uploaded to Moodle. In interviews, the Panel found students and staff to be adequately informed about assessment policies and procedures. Students were aware of passing requirements and procedures related to the submission of assessments and grade appeals.

- Both formative and summative assessments are used on the BBUS programme, although the use of formative assessments is less prevalent. All assessments have a marking rubric specifying the assessment criteria, which is shared with students. The rubrics are internally verified to ensure consistency with the assessment requirements and CILOs. According to the Assessment and Moderation Policy, students must be provided with feedback within two weeks of the assessment. This normally takes the form of comments recorded on the Turnitin submission. The Panel was informed that students can also seek feedback during a tutor's office hours.

- The Applied Research and Enterprise Policy includes provisions for ethical approval of research projects undertaken by staff and students. Appropriate forms have been developed to ensure research projects and activities are approved and in line with scientific principles, including ethical considerations. The Panel was provided with examples of these in practice, which demonstrate that they are implemented.

- To ensure transparency in marking, rubrics are developed, and moderated prior to assessments being given to students as part of the internal verification process. Before assessments are evaluated, norming is undertaken by having different markers mark the same assessment. This supports consistency, fairness and rigour in the grading process. After the marking has been completed, the Course Coordinator verifies all the marks to ensure there are no anomalies and internal post-assessment moderation is undertaken. The outcomes of marking and moderation, along with samples of assessments, are maintained in course files on Sharepoint, and tutors comment on student performance and the assessments in the Course Review Reports. Limited external moderation of some BBUS courses was recently undertaken by Ahlia University, but this is yet to be fully implemented and extended to a larger number of courses on the programme [see also Indicator 3.3]. The Results and Reporting policy includes provisions for approving, amending, and accurately recording students' grades in the Student Management System, which further facilities transparency, fairness and rigour of the assessment process.

- Students may appeal their assessment results, and the procedure for doing this is outlined in the Student Academic Appeal policy. The implementation of this policy ensures the transparency and validity of the assessments in the programme. The Appeal Committee considers every appeal and issues a decision. There were 83 appeals lodged between Fall 2017 and Spring 2020 in the programme. The Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy contains provisions for addressing academic misconduct and evidence has been provided of its consistent implementation across different courses. Misconduct cases are reported by faculty to the Programme Manager who investigates the allegations and makes a decision based on the evidence supplied. The decision letter is issued by the Head of Faculty, and a copy is sent to the Registrar and Student Services. The Panel was provided with statistics about academic misconduct cases for the last three years and found them to be consistent in number, with a slight increase in 2020-2021, which, as noted in interviews, has been attributed to the use of online assessments. The Panel is satisfied that appropriate provisions are in place for addressing academic misconduct and appeals by the students on the BBUS programme.

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*

- BP has a clear Student Admission Policy in line with its Enrolment and Academic Progression Policy, which is accessible to all staff *via* BP's quality management system on SharePoint. The Panel notes that the admission policy and criteria are also published on BP's website. The admission policy includes clear selection criteria to ensure that students admitted are at a level appropriate for the qualification, and admissions are fair and equitable for females and males. In 2020-2021, 58% of students registered on the BBUS programme were female, which is consistent with the percentage of female students admitted at 61%. The policy allows for both direct and indirect entry with clearly defined criteria focusing on proficiency in English language and Mathematics. The Panel confirmed the implementation of the admission policy and procedures during the site visit interviews with senior management and was informed that the Student Admission Policy is currently being reviewed. The Panel is of the view that the admission requirements are appropriate and fair.

- The admission criteria set out in the Student Admission Policy and the major-specific requirements listed in the PADs ensure that students with appropriate qualifications and backgrounds are admitted to the BBUS programme. The general requirement is a 70% Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) at secondary school. Applicants from other school systems and countries must provide evidence of equivalency of their qualifications. In addition, all applicants must pass relevant English and Mathematics tests. BP uses students' passing rates as a measure of the appropriateness of the Admission Policy. The Panel was provided with achievements of graduates for the last five years and the ratio of graduates to admitted students as evidence of this. Furthermore, the BBUS admission criteria has been benchmarked with Ahlia University's criteria and found to be consistent with, or more rigorous than, local standards and expectations of the specialisation.

- Admission to the BBUS programme requires applicants to demonstrate proficiency and competence in English and Mathematics, as part of the entry criteria, by passing appropriate tests in these subjects. Students who fail these tests are placed on the Foundation Programme at BP for one or two semesters, at the end of which they must pass an English Proficiency Test (which is IELTS 5.0 equivalent) and a Mathematics test to start the BBUS programme. From the cohort analysis for the last five years, the Panel noted that the majority of BBUS students are admitted *via* the Foundation Programme compared to direct entry students. The Panel was informed during interviews that the Foundation students are well prepared for the programme and on par with the direct entry students. Additionally, a comprehensive orientation programme is in place for all newly admitted students (see also Indicator 2.5). Thus, the Panel is of the view that the remedial support for inadequately prepared students is appropriate and functional.

- BP has arrangements which allow students admitted to the programme to apply for credit transfer, both internal and external. This arrangement follows a set of requirements clearly published in the Student Admission Policy and the Credit Recognition Policy. The policies cover both recognition of prior learning and credit transfer. Among others, there is a requirement for the staff making the recognition decisions to have sufficient subject knowledge and to ensure alignment of prior learning to the leaning in the BBUS programme. A sample application for, and decision on, credit recognition was provided to the Panel as evidence of how this process has been implemented. As for progression of students, requirements are specified in the Enrolment and Academic Progression Policy and student progression is monitored at the Faculty and Academic Board level. Progression data for the last four years is reported in the SER.

- The Panel notes that the Student Admission Policy is in its second version now, having been first approved in 2008 and revised in December 2014. The Panel was informed that the original admission policy was benchmarked to the Polytechnic Institute of New Zealand. More recently the BBUS admission criteria were benchmarked locally with Ahlia University. The Admission Policy is currently under review and the Panel was informed that student performance data was being used to inform the review, in addition to local benchmarking with the University of Bahrain. While the Panel acknowledges that the policy is reviewed and revised, it believes, as recommended in Section 4.1, that this should be done on a regular basis and, as recommended in Section 4.4, a more comprehensive benchmarking process with international institutions should take place.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- Internal procedures relating to BP's human resources strategy are guided by the institutional Human Resource Management Policy in conjunction with the CSB. The Panel notes that the policy sets out the procedures for induction as well as training and development of staff members, but does not have procedures for recruitment, appraisals and promotion because they are 'under ongoing review'. Draft policy documents and procedures for recruitment and promotion were provided during the virtual visit. The Panel was informed that recruitment is facilitated internally by a Recruitment Committee when a position becomes available, with BP interviewing and selecting candidates and the CSB assigning a grade and issuing the contract. Similarly, an Academic Promotion Committee was established in 2020 and faculty could apply for a promotion starting from 2021 once budgetary restrictions were eased. However, the recruitment and promotion policies are still in a draft version, although the Panel learned from interviews that the related procedures have been approved. With regards to appraisals, the CSB's performance management system (Adaa) is utilised to document staff objectives at the beginning of the academic year, and performance indicators at the end of the year. New staff members are given an induction which covers all of the relevant information. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the policies and procedures are appropriate but urges BP, as per the recommendation in Section 4.1, to ensure that their draft versions should be formally approved as a matter of priority, to ensure that current practices are documented.

- BP has established distinguished award schemes to promote academic research in line with its Applied Research and Enterprise Activities policy. The Panel notes that the policy aims to provide support for high standard research with potential to contribute to professional and industrial development as well as T&L. The procedures cover application for applied research approval, reporting of output, external publication/presentation, and recognition. The Panel confirmed the application of the research policy and procedures during the interviews but noted that research outputs are limited. This has been attributed to high teaching loads and other responsibilities which limit the time faculty can devote to research activities. The Panel recognises that BP is a polytechnic, and not a traditional university, and therefore has different research expectations. The Strategic and Internationalisation Plan 2020-2024 contains goals related to value-added and applied research with industry partners, which contributes to solving societal and industry problems. The current research policies and procedures are appropriate and aligned with these goals; however, to achieve the desired results, faculty workloads need to be revised (as recommended below), to ensure that faculty members are given sufficient time to pursue research.

- Academic staff workloads are covered in BP's Human Resource Management Policy. Detailed workload procedures and parameters are set out in the policy with minimum Timetabled Teaching Hours (TTH) and or student supervision prescribed for each

academic rank. Programme Managers are expected to teach or supervise students at least eight hours per week, while tutors have a 15- or 16-hour weekly TTH/student supervision workload. However, the actual teaching hours provided to the Panel show that some tutors are teaching 20 hours per week, and some Programme Managers have 16 or 20 hours of each week in addition to their administrative responsibilities. BP is aware of the impact of increased teaching loads and attributes them, as mentioned in interviews, to a shortage of staff due to budgetary constraints introduced during the pandemic with vacant positions not being replaced. This is also documented in the annual programme review report for 2019-2020 and in the BBUS Risk Register as a key risk for the programme. The Panel agrees that academic staff workloads are not appropriate and are also impacting opportunities for faculty to engage in research. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should adjust the academic staff workloads to ensure that they are appropriate and consistent with the Human Resource Management Policy and allow faculty to engage in applied research in line with the Applied Research and Enterprise Activities policy, and BP's strategic goals.

- There is no mention of the special needs of women in the SER, but this was satisfactorily addressed by BP during interviews with administrative staff. The Panel was provided with the terms of reference for the Equal Opportunity Committee which 'aims to integrate the needs of women in the context of opportunities in all areas of work in the Polytechnic and the achievement of equal opportunities for all staff'.

- The School of Business has 36 full-time academic members with an appropriate range of qualifications, specialisations and professional experience. According to the faculty profile information provided to the Panel, eight academic staff (representing 22%) have a PhD, 23 have at least a Master's degree, the remaining staff a Bachelor degree qualification. Furthermore, five members of the academic staff have relevant professional qualifications, and a large number have teaching qualifications and fellowships from Advance Higher Education in the United Kingdom as well as several years of teaching experience in various local and international institutions. During the interviews, the Panel was informed that there is a shortage of academic staff in the School, as several faculty members left BP during the pandemic for different reasons, and BP views this as a risk to academic standards and teaching quality. However, four new faculty members were recruited in the first semester of 2021-2022, which indicates that the risk is being mitigated, although, additional staff are still required. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should take action to recruit additional faculty members and provide appropriate incentives to enhance staff retention, to ensure that there are sufficient academic staff to teach on the programme. To support its research aspirations, the Panel also advises BP to consider increasing the proportion of staff members with a PhD qualification.

- The arrangements for professional development of academic staff are outlined in the Human Resources Management Policy and handled by the T&L Unit in collaboration with

the Training and Development Committee. The T&L Policy sets out a detailed procedure for supporting professional development needs and there is a requirement to record and analyse all training needs to feed into individual training plans. These needs are identified as part of the staff appraisal using the Adaa system. As per the policy, each academic staff is required to complete at least 20 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in an academic year by attending in-house or external workshops and courses. The Panel was provided with evidence of internal, external and online professional development sessions undertaken by staff and found them to be appropriate. This was also confirmed in interviews by staff. All sessions are evaluated using surveys to ensure that they support staff CPD needs. However, the 2019-2020 annual programme review report indicates that only 52% of the faculty in the School at the time were able to complete their required 20 CPD hours, due to the increase in teaching workloads. The Panel acknowledges that suitable and effective CPD arrangements are in place but urges BP to ensure that staff are allocated time to participate in CPD activities by reducing teaching loads as discussed previously.

- According to the SER, BP has no formal policy to retain academic staff. However, the Panel notes a move to place academic staff on the H Scale in the CSB Academic Salary Schedule as an incentive to improve staff retention. This has not been enough to curtail the staff turnover in the last three semesters and additional measures need to be put in place to ensure staff retention, as discussed above.

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*

- BP shares its campus and classrooms with the University of Bahrain. A 15-minute video was shared with the Panel detailing all the different teaching and learning resources and facilities available to the BBUS students. The Panel found these to be appropriately equipped, which was confirmed in interviews with staff and students, and in the results of the Student Services and Student Experience Surveys. There are 64 classrooms with active smartboards, and 44 computer laboratories across campus, each equipped with an average of 20 to 22 computers which are not more than two years old. With less than 900 students on the BBUS programme, the number of classrooms and laboratories are adequate for the number of students, as evidenced by the utilization data.

- BBUS staff and students have access to WiFi facilities on campus and 44 computer laboratories across campus which are equipped with Windows 10, Microsoft Office 365,

Sage 50, Microsoft Project, and Microsoft Visio. Furthermore, the Library is equipped with assistive technology tools, including Text-to-Speech App, Assistive Bulletin, Read Speaker Tool, and the Standardized Assistive Assessment Tool to support students with impairments and disabilities. The availability and adequacy of Information Technology (IT) facilities are monitored by the Information and Communication Technology Services Directorate (ICTS) which collects and tracks utilization data. Feedback from students about IT facilities is also collected in the Student Services Survey to ensure their adequacy. Interviews with students confirmed that they were generally satisfied with the available IT facilities and that their needs were met.

- BP has a modern Library and Learning Centre (LLC) which was shown to the Panel in the video tour. In addition to books and other learning resources, it is equipped with 24 computers and has group or private study rooms for students. The Encore dynamic service platform and search tool is available to search for resources (physical and e-resources) both on and off campus. Resources listed in the CDs are provided in the LLC to ensure students have access to the required and recommended textbooks. The LLC also provides access to a wide range of databases and collections such as Emerald, EBSCO, e-Book Central, LinkedIn and Science Direct, which were demonstrated to the Panel during the visit. LLC resources are evaluated by students in the Student Services and Student Experience Surveys, and in 2019, the internationally recognised LibQual+ survey was conducted to appraise the Library, which showed high levels of satisfaction from students and staff. These evaluation instruments assure the adequacy of the library resources and provision.

- BP has a dedicated Maintenance and Projects Department which is responsible for the maintenance of physical resources and systems. The maintenance of resources follows BP's Maintenance Department Preventative Maintenance Plan, which provides regular inspections at daily, monthly and quarterly intervals as well as outsourced maintenance contracts with similar regular inspections. The ICTS is responsible for maintaining the IT resources in line with the Information and Communication Technology Services Policy. Additional mechanisms are available for the maintenance of other services such as the library. Areas which require improvements are documented as actions in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and a progress report ensures that these actions are taken.

- Students on the BBUS programme receive a comprehensive induction which covers, among others, health and safety based on the institutional Health and Safety Policy. Evidence of safety signs and emergency evacuation arrangements was provided to the Panel and interviews with staff and students confirmed that health and safety arrangements are taken seriously and widely communicated. Students and staff also have access to a Health and Wellness Centre on campus which has a range of sports and gym equipment, and a medical clinic staffed by a senior nurse. The virtual tour confirmed the

availability and adequacy of these facilities and satisfied the Panel that appropriate health and safety arrangements were in place.

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*

- BP uses Banner as the centralised Management Information System (MIS) for storing and managing student records. Banner is integrated with the Learning Management System (LMS) Moodle and with SharePoint, which is a platform for secure storage and sharing of information. The functionalities of Banner are listed and described in the SER, and as noted, the system facilitates attendance tracking, processing and storage of academic records, identification of at-risk students, provision of academic advising, and management of workloads, among other functionalities. A curriculum management system called Masar (Akari) has been introduced to provide an integrated platform for managing programme and course data by providing a document repository and generating PADs and CDs. All of the above-mentioned systems were demonstrated to the Panel during the virtual visit and found to be appropriate for supporting the programme's information needs. Reports are generated based on the data stored and used to inform decision making, as confirmed in interviews.

- BP generates reports that are used to track utilization of resources, in order to facilitate the planning of academic interventions. A sample classroom utilization report generated by the timetabling system to help achieve equitable and efficient use of classroom space was provided to the Panel. Tracking reports relevant to the utilization of the IT resources and e-resources available in the LLC are also generated. The Panel was provided with the LLC Committee meeting minutes as evidence of how these reports are used to inform decision making, and also found examples in other committees' meetings. The Panel also learned that the tracking reports are used to monitor staffing, student progression and at-risk students, amongst others. Evidence was provided to support these claims. The Panel confirms that mechanisms are in place to generate tracking reports and use these to inform decision making.

- The Panel notes that there are provisions for the security of learner's records and accuracy of results in BP's Results and Reporting Policy. The Policy defines the processes for accurate recording and approval of student results, grades' amendments and authorization, and secure storage of students' records, including the use of password-protected folders and encryption in the Student Management System. The Desktop

Security Guidelines provide an additional layer of security, along with backup procedures. The ICTS is responsible for ensuring the security of students' records, while the Registry implements appropriate processes to verify the accuracy of the results and graduation requirements. The Panel finds these arrangements to be appropriate.

- The accuracy of certificates and transcripts is covered in the Results and Reporting policy. The Policy lists the specific information which must be included in student transcripts as well as the procedures for issuing and printing transcripts and degree certificates, samples of which were provided to the Panel. The Panel learned from interviews that there is an audit process for issuing degrees, and a requirement for a degree to be manually signed by three parties to ensure accuracy. While robust and rigorous, this procedure also causes delays, and this has been further exacerbated by the global pandemic, with alumni reporting in surveys that they had not received their degree certificates for more than a year after completing the programme. This was confirmed in interviews with staff who acknowledged that significant delays had occurred in the last two years, although no indication was given of how the process could be improved. The Panel recommends that BP should expedite the issuing of degree certificates and ensure they are issued to graduates in a timely manner.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

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

Judgment: *Addressed*

- The SER lists and describes a range of diverse student support services and resources which are in place for all BP students, including those on the BBUS programme, to access. These include a well-equipped library, laboratories, the Moodle LMS, pastoral care, mentoring, career guidance and services, online databases and e-resources, amongst others. The provisions governing the management of these support services are detailed in the Student Services Policy. The support offered caters to the needs of all students, including those with special needs, and this move is promoted by the Widening Participation Team (WPT). The new students' orientation provides students with information about all of the different support services available and how they can be accessed. The Panel confirmed in interviews with students that these services are available, suitable and accessible, although there are access restrictions currently in place due to the global pandemic. The effectiveness of the support services was also confirmed in the results of the Student Services and Student Experience Surveys. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the support services provided to students are appropriate.

- Career guidance and support services are provided by BP's Career and Employment Centre (CEC). The Panel was provided with a brief document on career awareness and open day events held at BP, along with summary feedback from participants. The Panel notes that the events had an appropriate career-centered approach and content, and received positive feedback from the follow-on surveys. Other career-focused events arranged for students include presentations by graduates and alumni reflections. The Panel heard from graduates during the virtual interviews that the career support they received from BP was helpful and, in several instances, students were able to find jobs with the industry partner involved in their Cooperative Industry Project. The recent establishment of the Industry Connect portal, linking industry and BP graduates, creates further opportunities for BBUS graduates to secure employment. The CEC had an 84% and 88% satisfaction rating on the Student Services Surveys in 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively. All of these findings reinforce the Panel's view that BBUS students are provided with appropriate career guidance and support.

- All new BP students, including BBUS students, are given a comprehensive orientation to induct them to the BP and their programme. The procedures for the orientation are described in, and guided by, the Student Services Policy. The Orientation Committee which comprises staff members from across BP and a student representative, along with the Students Affairs Directorate, facilitates the development and deployment of the orientation programme that extends over several days. In 2020, the orientation was conducted over a period of five days virtually due to the global pandemic, starting with e-mails to students, a 'kick off video' and a virtual tour of the campus, followed by an orientation course on Moodle in lieu of the traditional presentations given to students in a face-to-face orientation. Feedback from previous orientations was used to inform and improve the most recent orientations which were, as confirmed through interviews, well received by students despite being fully online. The Panel appreciates the comprehensive student orientation programme at BP, which encompasses a range of information, services and resources for students to ensure that they are prepared to start their programme.

- Academic advising is offered to all students to help them progress. Provisions related to academic advising are available in the Student Support Policy and include a procedure and guidelines. All students admitted to the BBUS programme are assigned an academic advisor, who acts as the student's first point of contact. Students are required to meet their advisors to discuss any academic or personal issues which affect their learning or progression on the programme. The Panel was provided with sample academic advising forms for the BBUS programme and confirmed the implementation of academic advising arrangements in interviews with staff and students. The Panel noted, however, that the number of advisees assigned to an academic staff can be up to 40, which is significantly more than the maximum of 15 prescribed in BP's Student Support Policy, and further contributes to increased workloads of academic staff (see also Indicator 2.2). The Panel

recommends that BP should adhere to the maximum number of students allocated to an academic advisor in line with its Student Support Policy.

- The procedure for managing support for students with special needs is stated in the Student Support Policy. The policy encourages early identification of and support for students with special needs and this was evident in the broad ranging provision of services to these students. Data about students with special needs is collected at the time of enrollment and shared with relevant teaching and administrative staff through the database of students with Learning Differences, which was developed by the Student Affairs Directorate, so that they can provide appropriate support where needed. The WPT is also in place to support students with special educational needs. In 2020-2021 there were 20 special needs students in the BBUS programme and they are provided with appropriate assistance and aid such as additional time in examinations, which can be requested through the Assessment Accommodations Request Form. The Panel appreciates the comprehensive and appropriate support provided to students with special needs at BP.

- On the special needs of women, the Panel was provided with the Equal Opportunity Committee Terms of Reference as evidence of addressing the special needs of women, although this focusses only on female employees. Nevertheless, the Panel was able to verify through interviews that there are appropriate provisions for female students and for integrating women's needs, as well as ensuring equal opportunities for both genders. For example, in response to student feedback, the Activities Hall can only be used by women on Mondays since 2018-2019. The Panel also notes that there is an equitable balance of female and male students on the BBUS programme.

- The Academic Progression Policy and Student Support Policy govern procedures related to identifying, supporting and monitoring at-risk students. At-risk students are identified based on their CGPA, with students who have a CGPA of less than 2.25 and fail to increase it are deemed to be as at-risk. Tutors are also able to access students' assessment results on Banner and ensure a timely intervention by identifying students who might be at-risk based on first assessment marks or attendance warnings if they are not coming to classes. At-risk students are identified, and then, using the Student Referral Form, they are referred to meet regularly with their academic advisor to assess their learning support needs and agree on a study plan, which may include additional learning support. Their performance is tracked and monitored by the academic advisor and if they fail to improve, students may exit the BBUS programme with a Diploma in Business.

- The effectiveness of the support services is regularly reviewed through the Student Services Survey. The survey is conducted annually by the Quality, Measurements and Analysis and Planning Unit (QMAP), and the results are forwarded to the Student Services Director and subsequently shared with the relevant staff and added to the QIP for follow up and monitoring. The Panel notes that some improvements to the restaurant and food

services, the classrooms and the WiFi network have been made in response to student feedback.

Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

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

Judgment: *Addressed*

- In line with the Assessment and Moderation Policy, different types of assessment methods are deployed in the BBUS programme, including case studies, group projects, presentations, reports, class discussions, examinations and assignments. These assessments are described in the CDs of each course and mapped to the CILOs to ensure that they are valid and reliable. They are also internally verified, and in the case of the Accounting major, externally verified by the ACCA. Appropriate weights are allocated to each assessment with lower weighting given to assessments which take place earlier in a semester, thus allowing students to improve their performance later if they do not do well initially. There is a strong emphasis on applied and practical assessments to ensure alignment with the programme aim and PILOs, and the meeting of academic standards. The level of complexity is appropriate for an undergraduate programme, and students are expected to demonstrate knowledge, skills and competencies consistent with the relevant NQF level of the course. According to the Assessment and Moderation Policy, first year assessments 'must provide low risk opportunities for students to learn' and final year assessments 'must require the synthesis of knowledge'. The Panel found that this approach was followed in the design of the BBUS assessments.

- Assessment design is covered in the Assessment and Moderation Policy and describes the need for 'constructive alignment' of assessments with learning outcomes as the key criterion for selecting an assessment method. CILOs must be achieved at a passing grade, which is the minimum standard required to demonstrate achievement. Assessments are mapped to CILOs and every CILO must be assessed by at least two assessments, although this has been affected by the move to online teaching during the pandemic, with a decrease in the number of assessments in each course. The Panel learned, however, that despite this change, the integrity of the assessment to CILO mapping has been maintained and online assessments are being mapped to the newly introduced Quality Matters rubrics and standards. CILOs are mapped to PILOs in the PADs with the exception of elective courses

(see Indicator 1.2), and mapped also to BP's eight Employability Skills, which are the graduate attributes.

- The primary mechanism used to ensure that graduates' achievements meet the PILOs is the mapping of CILOs and assessments to PILOs. As per the Assessment and Moderation Policy, students must meet the minimum passing standards in all assessments in a course linked to a specific CILO in order to achieve that CILO. To meet the PILOs, students must achieve all the CILOs that have been mapped to it. To assure learning, the mapping of assessments, CILOs and PILOs goes through approval and verification processes outlined in the Programme Approval Policy, with involvement by the PC, Faculty Board, CDU, AQAC and Academic Board. In addition to direct assessment methods, BP also makes use of indirect assessments to obtain data about graduates' achievements, such as the Alumni Survey, the Employer Survey, feedback from the CAG meetings and graduate destinations. The graduate data research project was also established in 2017 to understand how alumni rated their experience at BP and use that data to determine if the PILOs are met. The Panel finds that these mechanisms are an effective means to ensure that PILOs are being achieved.

- There are several mechanisms in place to evaluate and improve the assessment process, including end of semester Course Review Reports in which faculty reflect on the assessments in every course. Course surveys are filled in by students for every course and contain questions about assessments. Assessment results are verified and any anomalies trigger changes to assessments. Feedback from internal verification and moderation is used to inform assessment design and revisions. External moderation by the ACCA and the recently initiated moderation of four BBUS courses by Ahlia University also contribute to assessment evaluation. The Panel was informed during the virtual interviews that minor changes are made to assessments every semester; however, a more significant update was made in response to the global pandemic with assessments being re-designed for the online mode.

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: *Addressed*

- The Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy and related procedures, guidelines and forms are available to all students through the Moodle LMS and on BP's website. The new student orientation includes information about academic integrity. Staff have access to the policy on Sharepoint and a summary of key points is included in the Staff Handbook. A

workshop by the CDU is held every year to inform academic staff about the policy requirements and all new staff learn about academic integrity processes at BP in the Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning (CTTL) course they must complete. The Panel found during the virtual interviews that students and staff were well informed about academic integrity and plagiarism, which indicates that the current dissemination practices have been effective.

- The processes for deterring and detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct are outlined in the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy and strictly applied. Students must submit all continuous assessments through Turnitin which is then used to check the similarity index. The Panel was informed during interviews that in the first-year English language courses, students are allowed up to 20%, while in all other courses the index should not be higher than 15%. However, the Panel also learned that faculty check every submission regardless of the index to verify whether plagiarism has occurred, which shows a robust understanding of how to use Turnitin effectively. The Panel was provided with samples of assessments which confirmed that the policies and procedures were followed and consistently applied.

- Cases of academic misconduct are rigorously detected, recorded and tracked. Appropriate actions, including penalties and remedial sessions, are taken in response to academic misconduct and specified in decision letters sent to students following an investigation by the Programme Manager. A copy of the letter is also sent to Registry so that the case can be recorded in the student file, which allows for multiple offences by the same students in different courses to be tracked and monitored.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- The Assessment and Moderation Policy describes formal procedures for internal moderation of assessments and the selection of internal moderators. At BP, there is a two-stage internal moderation process, involving pre-assessment moderation of assessments, which is called verification, to ensure the validity and reliability of the assessment instrument. After the assessment has been marked, post-moderation is undertaken of a sample of assessments using the marking rubrics to verify the grading. A Moderation Schedule is prepared every semester showing the list of courses which have been allocated to a faculty member to verify and moderate course assessments. The criteria for selecting internal moderators are specified in the Assessment and Moderation Policy and applied in practice.

- Faculty reflect on the outcomes of the internal moderation in the Course Review Reports and use these to inform improvements of assessments and the course. At the programme level, the annual programme review report references moderation outcomes. Recommendations to make changes to the programme based on moderation feedback are considered by the PC and implemented in line with the Programme Approval Policy. The use of post-assessment moderation ensures that the marking and grading are consistent, fair and in line with academic standards. This is achieved by moderators applying marking rubrics, which have been verified, to the marked assessments to confirm the marks.

- In 2019, the CDU conducted an audit of the effectiveness of the assessment verification and moderation process in 10% of each programme's courses at BP. All the courses in the BBUS programme were found to follow the policy. This audit was not repeated in 2020 due to the global pandemic and lack of resources. The Panel finds the audit to be an appropriate mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the internal moderation processes and advises BP to continue with this practice.

- Although there are provisions for external moderation in the Assessment and Moderation Policy, these have not been deployed fully in the BBUS programme. The Panel learned through interviews that BP had an external moderation agreement with Maastricht University in the Netherlands in the past but this was discontinued several years ago due to budgetary constraints. In 2019-2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with Ahlia University to conduct benchmarking and external moderation of BBUS courses. To date, the external moderation of only four courses has been completed with others pending. There has also been some moderation of the English, Accounting and BAFI courses by the University of Bahrain and of the Accounting and BAFI majors by ACCA, CIMA and ICAEW. The criteria for selecting external moderators are specified in the Assessment and Moderation Policy and applied in practice. While formal mechanisms for external moderation exist, they have not been fully implemented in all the BBUS majors. The Accounting and BAFI majors have been the main beneficiaries of feedback from external moderators, while courses in the other three majors have not been subjected to external moderation in recent years. The Panel recommends that BP should extend the external moderation processes outlined in the Assessment and Moderation Policy to all the BBUS programme majors in order to review and improve courses, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the external moderation arrangements.

- External moderation has had a limited impact on the review and improvement of the BBUS programme and courses since it has not been fully deployed across all the majors. Changes have been made to the examination assessments of the core Accounting and BAFI courses in response to feedback from the ACCA, CIMA and ICAEW. However, the impact of the external moderation by Ahlia University and the University of Bahrain is not yet

evident as changes suggested by external moderators are still under consideration and have not yet been used to inform course level changes.

- There are currently no mechanisms in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the BBUS programme's external moderation arrangements, as these arrangements are relatively recent and their full impact on the programme and courses is not yet evident. These mechanisms will need to be developed and deployed in due course, as mentioned in the recommendation made by the Panel above.

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*

- Work-based learning is embedded into the BBUS curriculum by deploying PBL and PPjBL across most courses. The Offsite and Workplace Learning Activities Policy provides guidance and procedures for industry-based projects and industry field trips, which, along with industry speakers are the cornerstone of BP's work-based learning approach. Although there is no internship course or formal requirement to do an internship to graduate, the capstone Cooperative Industry Project which is worth 60 credits is a 'de-facto' internship as students have to engage in a consultancy-type project with an industry partner to solve a real-life problem. The CDs for the Cooperative Industry Projects in different majors outline the procedures to be followed to ensure that students have an equivalent experience and are assessed fairly and equitably on their performance in an industry setting. Students who wish to do an internship for their own personal and professional development can do so with support from the CEC and through the recently introduced Industry Connect portal.

- The roles and responsibilities of the industry and academic supervisors and students undertaking the Cooperative Industry Project in lieu of an internship are described in detail in Indicator 3.5. Since there is no formal internship requirement to graduate, any internships undertaken by students are of their own accord and facilitated through the CEC which acts as a bridge between industry and students.

- BP has integrated work-based learning components throughout the BBUS programme by using the PBL and PPjBL approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Courses are designed to expose students to industry practices through case studies, guest speakers, field trips, industry projects based on real-life business scenarios and student competitions sponsored by professional bodies. The Panel was provided with abundant evidence of

these activities taking place across all majors. Since all assessments are linked to CILOs and PILOs, they contribute towards the achievement of learning outcomes and ensure students develop employability skills.

- The assessment of work-based learning components in individual courses is managed based on the principles and procedures outlined in the Assessment and Moderation Policy, which have been discussed in Indicators 1.5 and 3.1, and which the Panel found to be appropriate in terms of content and level. The assessment arrangements for the Cooperative Industry Project will be discussed in detail in Indicator 3.5.

- Feedback from graduates and alumni and graduate destination data collected by BP are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the work-based learning components in the BBUS programme. Feedback is also sought from employers and the CAG about the work-readiness of graduates. The Panel was informed that BBUS graduates are favourably rated by employers and internship providers because of their problem-solving skills, attitude, flexibility and ability to adapt to a workplace environment, which has made them highly employable as evidenced in the employment rates of BBUS graduates.

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 Cooperative Industry Project is the capstone project component in the BBUS programme. It is worth 60 credits and students spend the entire final semester of their programme doing only the project, and no other courses. The project has appropriate CILOs and adopts a consultancy approach with groups of two to four students having to solve a business problem for a real company. Upon completion, students are expected to demonstrate all eight of BPs employability skills. The assessments are designed to evaluate the achievement of the CILOs, and the CILOs are mapped to all the PILOs, which is appropriate for a capstone project of this nature and aligned with BP's overall mission. The Panel is satisfied that the capstone project contributes effectively to the achievement of the BBUS PILOs.

- Students have an academic and an industry supervisor while completing the capstone project. While the roles and responsibilities of the academic advisor are clear and based on providing students with academic support to complete the milestones and project assessment components, the roles and responsibilities of the industry supervisor are not

stated in any documentation. The Panel requested evidence of training or information provided to industry supervisors to ensure that they can effectively assess students but no formal documentation in this regard was available. This was confirmed by the Panel in interviews with industry supervisors. The industry supervisor's appraisal is worth 5% of the capstone project marks and the Panel was informed that this was higher in the past but was reduced because academic supervisors were more experienced in student assessment principles and processes. The Panel is of the view that the industry supervisors' appraisal is critical to ensure that the CILOs are achieved since the project is work-based and therefore should carry more weight. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should review and revise the weighting of the industry supervisor's evaluation in the Cooperative Industry Project and provide appropriate training to industry supervisors to support them in the evaluation of students.

- The academic supervisors are responsible for monitoring students' academic progress and typically senior faculty are assigned to this role because of their experience. They meet with students weekly to track their milestones and visit them on-site. Since the global pandemic, most projects have been undertaken in virtual mode through online meetings. The industry supervisor approves the initial project plan and monitors students' progress with the specific project that they are doing; they however do not contribute towards the preparation of the final report or presentation. Student satisfaction with the supervision process and resources is assessed through the Teaching Survey Form and Course Survey Form since the industry project is a course in the BBUS programme. During the virtual interviews, students reported being very satisfied with this course and emphasised that it was the highlight of the BBUS programme. Due to the project-based nature of this course, which requires supervision rather than teaching, the Panel advises BP to consider developing alternative methods for evaluating student satisfaction with the supervision and resources available to them.

- The assessment mechanisms for the industry project are rigorous, comprehensive, and structured around project milestones and student performance in an industry setting. The initial project plan (10%) is assessed by the academic supervisor and approved by the industry supervisor. Students must maintain a log of their activities which is also assessed (15%) to ensure that milestones are achieved. The final deliverable includes a report (20%) and client-facing presentation (30%) in which students must present and justify the business solution they have proposed. This is followed by an appraisal by the industry supervisor (5%) and a viva (20%) by the academic supervisor to ensure that students have met the learning outcomes. All submissions are double marked and internally moderated to ensure consistency. The course has been mapped to level eight of the NQF, and the CILOs and related assessments are set at an appropriate level. Overall, the Panel finds the assessment arrangements for the capstone project to be rigorously implemented and effective, apart from the weighting allocated to the industry supervisor's appraisal.

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- The capstone project course undergoes a Course Review which captures feedback collected from different stakeholders, including students, academic staff and industry supervisors. Revisions are made based on this feedback, and one example that was mentioned in interviews is the reduction of the weighting allocated to the industry supervisor's appraisal. There is an awareness of the need to expand the number of staff who supervise capstone projects and subsequently reduce the number of students in a group. This will be done through training initiatives.

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*

- A scrutiny of students' assessed work shows that the level of their achievements is appropriate and reflects their ability to create and innovate, particularly in the Cooperative Industry Project. The applied nature of assessments, PBL/PPjBL approach, authentic industry-based capstone project and exposure to industry practices through guest speakers and field trips in the BBUS programme have benefited students by developing a more acute awareness of industry and work-based practices compared to students on similar programmes in traditional university settings, as evidenced in the assessment samples, and interviews with students, graduates and industry representatives.

- Progression and retention rates in the BBUS programme are consonant with those in equivalent programmes with more than 90% of students progressing each semester and staying in the programme on average. These rates are monitored by the Registry and shared with Programme Managers, and are also reported in the annual programme review reports. The ratio of admitted students to successful graduates was provided to the Panel, however the data was presented by year instead of by cohort which made it difficult to determine the percentage of students admitted to a particular cohort that graduated within the prescribed length of study. Furthermore, students admitted to the programme do not declare a major until the end of the second year which doesn't allow for comparisons to be made since admitted students are registered in the unendorsed general BBUS, while graduates are assigned to a BBUS major. Nevertheless, the Panel was able to establish the data for the 2016-2017 cohort which showed that 67% of the admitted students in that year (154 in total) graduated in 2019-2020 (103 in total) which is consistent with similar programmes in the region.

- While student progression data is monitored by the Registry, the CEC tracks graduate destinations at six months and one year after graduation. Progression rates in the

programme are appropriate and the employability data shows that BP graduates have better employment outcomes than other similar programmes in Bahrain, based on a benchmarking with Ahlia University. The data provides assurance that academic standards are being met. Most students progress satisfactorily in the programme and pass assessments which are quality assured and linked to CILOs and PILOs, and most of the BBUS graduates find employment within six to 12 months of graduating.

- BP conducts an Employer Survey to collect feedback about graduates and organises an annual CAG meeting during which industry representatives share their feedback about the BBUS programme and graduates. The Panel spoke with several CAG members from high profile government and private institutions, most of whom had employed BP and BBUS graduates, and heard positive comments about graduates' skills, competencies and attitudes. This is reflected in the Employer Survey results, as well as the high employability rate of business graduates compared to other local universities, all of which are a strong indication of employer satisfaction with the graduates' profile. The Panel appreciates the work-ready graduates of BP who have relevant and suitable employability skills to enter the labour market and meet the needs of public and private sector employers in Bahrain

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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.

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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*

- BP has an institutional Policies and Procedures Policy that provides a framework and guidance for developing, implementing and reviewing policies and regulations addressing the needs of the academic programmes, including the BBUS programme. A full range of policies and regulations is in place covering all areas of the academic provision, in addition to support services as mentioned throughout this report. These are accessible to staff through Sharepoint and to students through Moodle. The Panel was also provided with evidence of policies being disseminated by e-mail, through the CTTL, and in training workshops by relevant units when new policies are introduced, or policy changes are made. The Panel confirmed through interviews that there was a general awareness amongst staff and students about the policies relevant to their areas. At the same time, it was noted that some policies had not been reviewed for more than five years. According to the Policies and Procedures Policy, reviews should take place every four years. Furthermore, the Panel also noted instances of policies being practiced without being formally approved (see Indicator 2.2). Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should review all policies in line with the institutional policy review schedule outlined in the Policies and Procedures Policy, and ensure that all policies are formally approved before being implemented.

- The Quality Assurance (QA) management system governing the BBUS is institution-wide and defined in BP's Policies and Procedures Policy. The implementation of the QA system at the programme level is facilitated by the BBUS Programme Committee, and at the faculty level by the Faculty Board. At the institutional level the AQAC has oversight of all QA matters relating to teaching, learning and assessment in BP's programmes, with final approval for new programmes and major changes resting with the Academic Board and Board of Trustees. Meeting minutes of these committees and various QA reports provided to the Panel show that the QA system is consistently implemented in the BBUS programme.

- The QA system and structure provides a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of policies across BP. This is done across all institutional levels, with academic and administrative staff members being responsible for implementing policies and procedures related to their roles (e.g., the Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy or the Student Services Policy which have been discussed previously in Indicators 3.2 and 2.5 respectively), and the Head of School and FOBL Dean being responsible for monitoring the implementation by receiving regular reports, which are submitted to or generated by the QMAP and AQAC and considered at the Faculty and Academic Boards. Based on the information provided in the documentation and interviews, the Panel is satisfied that the mechanisms in place for ensuring consistent implementation of policies and procedures are appropriate.

- The effective dissemination of all QA information through the Sharepoint portal ensures that staff are aware of QA issues and their role in ensuring effectiveness of the provision. Training workshops on QA are conducted for staff and QA matters are covered in the CTTL. The Panel found through interviews that staff have a robust understanding of QA principles, processes and instruments and their role in QA.

- According to the SER, QA activities are subject to continuous monitoring and improvement in line with the Review, Evaluation, and Improvement Policy. Findings from review processes are analysed and improvement needs are identified and added to the QIP. For the BBUS programme, these improvements are reported at the programme level in a BBUS QIP report and in the QIP Progress Report to the SMT. The Panel noted that a few items remain pending since 2016 in the BBUS QIP report and discussed this with QA staff in interviews to understand how it impinges on the effectiveness of the QA system. The Panel was assured that action items are only closed when items are unequivocally found to be no longer relevant or appropriate.

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 FOBL organizational chart is generated by the CSB and shows clear lines of responsibility. The Dean is the head of the Faculty which is made up of two schools. The School of Business offers the BBUS programme, while the School of Logistics and Maritime Studies runs the Bachelor of International Logistics Management (BILM) programme. Each school has a Head, although at the time of the virtual visit, the FOBL Quality Programme Manager was the acting head of the School of Business. Every programme has a Programme Manager who reports to the Head of School, while Course Coordinators and

Tutors report to the Programme Managers. There are clear job descriptions for all of the roles. The Panel concluded that the FOBL organizational chart is appropriate for the management of the programme and its majors.

- The reporting lines are evident and clear, based on the organizational structure. Programme Managers report to the Head of School, and the Head of School reports to the Dean who in turn reports to the Deputy CEO (Academic), and the Panel confirmed that all staff are aware of whom they report to. This in turn facilitates effective communication and decision making in the BBUS programme.

- The Panel was provided with the job descriptions for different management posts and the terms of reference for various committees, all of which are clearly stated.

- The PC, composed of the Head of School, Programme Managers, Course Coordinators and other representatives from the various support services outside the school, is responsible for the management of the BBUS programme. The PC reports to the Faculty Board and the Faculty Board to the Academic Board. There is also support from AQAC in overseeing the QA aspects of courses, assessments and learning outcomes. This structure enables academic standards to be monitored at different levels using a range of diverse mechanisms and feedback instruments described in various sections of this report.

- The BBUS programme is primarily managed by the PC with every major having a dedicated Programme Manager, except for HRM and Management which are overseen by one Programme Manager. The PC meeting minutes provided to the Panel, as well as interviews with programme and QA staff demonstrate that the programme management arrangements are appropriate and there is effective and responsible leadership of the programme. A student representative sits on the PC, also ensuring that students have a direct input into the way the programme is managed.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- The Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy outlines the arrangements for conducting an internal annual programme review and periodic reviews of programmes. There are also annual programme review templates, procedures and guidelines to be followed. The Panel was provided with the 2019-2020 BBUS annual programme review report and found it to be an honest, comprehensive, and detailed review of the programme based on a robust analysis of diverse stakeholder data and outcomes of QA processes. The

annual programme review process was adjusted in March 2021 in response to changes to the programme and courses necessitated by the pandemic. The Panel was informed that the 2020-2021 BBUS annual programme review was still being prepared and would be finalized in February 2022. While the Panel accepts that the recent changes have caused delays in this instance, the Panel advises BP to ensure that annual programme reviews are made available in a timely manner for revisions to be made to the BBUS programme before a new academic year commences. The annual programme review report typically contains recommendations for improving the BBUS programme and courses, and these are transferred to the BBUS QIP for monitoring and tracking.

- BP has appropriate mechanisms in place for monitoring the implementation of the annual programme review recommendations. The process for doing this is outlined in the QIP Procedure and carried out at several levels. The deployment of actions listed in the BBUS QIP is tracked by the PC, with oversight by the Quality Programme Manager in the FOBL who is also responsible for collating the tracking data and recording the status of the actions for the Faculty Board. The faculty-level data is then fed into the institutional QIP tracking process which is undertaken by QMAP and used to produce QIP progress and validation reports for all of the faculties and directorates at BP for the Academic Board. These processes are facilitated through the use of Sharepoint where the QIPs are stored and made accessible.

- The Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy includes appropriate provisions for periodic reviews of programmes. However, the Panel was informed that a comprehensive periodic review of the BBUS programme had not been undertaken and there was a reliance on reviews by the BQA, HEC and other regulatory bodies for this type of review. This approach is not in line with the institutional policy. Furthermore, a periodic review of a programme entails gathering feedback from a broad range of internal and external stakeholders to inform major changes to a programme after it has been running for an extended period of time, thus ensuring it remains relevant and fit for purpose. Thus, the Panel recommends that BP should implement a formal comprehensive periodic review of the BBUS programme in line with the institutional Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy, which includes input from internal and external stakeholders.

- The Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy includes mechanisms for ensuring the proper implementation of periodic reviews and related action plans through QIPs, however, these have not yet been deployed.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- BP has an institutional Benchmarking Framework and Policy with related procedures, templates and criteria for selecting benchmarking partners and reference points. The BBUS PADs include information about the benchmarking undertaken to compare standards on the programme with those in other institutions, however, with the exception of the HRM major PAD, no evidence of benchmarking has been provided. There are references to the recent local benchmarking with Ahlia University which was a performance comparison of the programme against 33 benchmarks, although this did not include reference points related to learning outcomes, the curriculum or QA processes to assure academic standards. The Accounting and BAFI majors have been benchmarked to professional body requirements of the ACCA, CIMA and ICAEW. The current benchmarking practices are not consistent across all the BBUS majors and not sufficiently comprehensive to compare academic standards. Furthermore, benchmarking partners need to be carefully selected to ensure they have a similar mission to BP and regional and international partners need to be included. The Panel recommends that BP should extend its benchmarking processes to cover all of the BBUS majors with appropriate and carefully selected regional and/or international institutions using reference points related to academic standards.

- The outcomes of the benchmarking with Ahlia University have been documented and considered at different committees and meetings, including the Academic Board. A list of improvement actions which emerged from the benchmarking exercise has been produced and the status of these actions, as of December 2021, was provided to the Panel. The Panel is satisfied that benchmarking outcomes were used to inform decision making and make improvements to the BBUS programme.

- BP has an Institutional Quality Survey Framework which details all the mechanisms used to collect data and feedback from internal and external stakeholders. These include the Teaching Survey, Course Survey, Student Experience Survey, Student Services Survey, and Alumni Survey amongst others. Following the move to online teaching, modified versions of the Teaching and Course Surveys were developed. In addition, the annual CAG meeting held in October acts as a focus group for collecting feedback about the FOBL programmes, including the BBUS, and graduates. The Panel finds that the surveys and focus group comprised of industry representatives are appropriate formal mechanisms for eliciting comments from stakeholders.

- Data collected through surveys is recorded, analysed and summarized in reports by QMAP and sent to relevant units and committees for discussion and follow up through actions in the QIPs. The data is used to make decisions and changes to the programme, as evident in the meeting minutes of the programme and other committees.

- Actions are taken in response to stakeholder feedback by relevant units to make improvements, and the status of these actions is recorded and tracked in the QIPs. The improvements are communicated to stakeholders *via* e-mails, newsletters and the institutional statistical booklet. The Measurement & Analysis Newsletter 'You Said, We Did' highlights changes made based on stakeholder feedback. Student representatives also sit on the PC and the Faculty Board which allows them to monitor changes. The Panel was informed during the virtual interviews that the CAG is updated about the outcomes of their previous feedback at the beginning of every annual meeting. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that appropriate mechanisms are in place to communicate improvements to stakeholders. Additionally, the survey results generally show an improvement over time, and the Panel was informed by students that they are satisfied with the progress BP has been making to address their concerns.

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*

- BP has a functioning institutional Curriculum Advisory Group (CAG) which is composed of a diverse and large group of professional and industry-based members from the public and private sector who are discipline experts, employers of BP graduates and BP alumni. The group was formerly known as the Curriculum Advisory Committee but in recent years its composition, role and focus has changed, leading to a change in the name. While terms of reference were available for the Committee, there are no terms of reference for the CAG. The Panel was informed that these were not required since the CAG is an event and not a committee. The Panel disagrees with this view because the CAG is an important mechanism through which feedback is obtained about BP's programmes and graduates. It is essential to ensure that all participants in CAG meetings have a shared understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should develop appropriate terms of reference for the CAG which are disseminated to all CAG members and effectively implemented.

- CAG meetings are typically held annually every October at an off-campus location, or virtually after the onset of the global pandemic. The sizeable CAG splits into smaller discipline-based groups during the meeting to discuss specific programmes and provide feedback about their relevance to the labour market as well as industry trends. CAG feedback is summarized and recorded in the annual programme review reports for follow up. The Panel was provided with evidence of this feedback being used to systematically inform decision-making in the BBUS programme, make changes to the curriculum and

introduce new offerings. For example, additional courses have been added, including financial management, social business, brand management, based on CAG feedback. The FOBL is currently developing new programmes in response to the labour market requirements such as digital marketing and entrepreneurship and including recent developments in analytic and artificial intelligence in the HRM major. The Panel concluded that BP is responsive to advice and feedback received from the CAG and uses it to systematically improve its programmes and offerings.

- BP has a rich industry engagement culture which stems from its mission to produce work-ready graduates who meet the labour market and societal needs of Bahrain. The Institution was created to fulfill this very purpose and has successfully demonstrated its ability to do so, as evidenced in its diverse interactions with industry and the high employment rates of its graduates. The industry interactions have been discussed at length throughout this Report and include regular CAG meetings, the CEC, the Industry Connect portal, the Cooperative Industry Project, applied research projects with industry, guest speakers, field trips and interactions with alumni. The benefits and outcomes of these interactions are evident in the graduate destinations of BBUS alumni, their high-profile positions across different sectors, and the regard in which they are held by employers. The Panel appreciates the robust and broad engagement with industry in the BBUS programme, which creates opportunities for students to enhance their employability skills and for graduates to meet the needs of the labour market and Bahraini society.

- All newly proposed programmes at BP are subjected to a thorough formal feasibility study which allows for scoping of the labour market to ensure the programme's relevance and currency. For programmes which are already in existence, such as the BBUS programme, this scoping is continuously done through annual CAG meetings, feedback from employers, and graduate destination and employment data. All of these mechanisms help ensure that the BBUS programme remains relevant and responsive to current market needs and trends. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that BP should regularly conduct formal studies on the labour market needs relevant to the BBUS programme.

- The effectiveness of the applied mechanisms is monitored and reviewed based on the outcomes acquired through them. Feedback from the CAG has been valuable and comprehensive, and sufficient data is collected through surveys with external stakeholders, such as employers and alumni, to analyse employment trends.

V. Conclusion

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

There is Confidence in the Bachelor of Business (BBUS) of the Faculty of Business and Logistics offered by the Bahrain Polytechnic.

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

1. The problem and project-based learning (PPjBL) approach to teaching and learning on the Bachelor of Business programme, which is effectively embedded in the learning outcomes, curriculum and assessments, and supports the achievement of the Bahrain Polytechnic mission to prepare work-ready graduates and promote lifelong learning.

2. The comprehensive student orientation programme at Bahrain Polytechnic which encompasses a range of information, services and resources for students to ensure they are prepared to start their programme.

3. The comprehensive and appropriate support provided to students with special needs at Bahrain Polytechnic.

4. The work-ready graduates of Bahrain Polytechnic who have relevant and suitable employability skills to enter the labour market and meet the needs of public and private sector employers in Bahrain.

5. The robust and broad engagement with industry in the Bachelor of Business programme, which creates opportunities for students to enhance their employability skills and for graduates to meet the needs of the labour market and Bahraini society.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Bahrain Polytechnic and/or the Faculty of business and logistics should:

1. Ensure that the Bachelor of Business programme title is accurately and consistently documented in all relevant institutional documentation and on the website.

2. Regularly review and revise the Bachelor of Business programme aims in consultation with relevant stakeholders based on the Review, Evaluation and Implementation policy, and ensure that programme aims are consistently recorded in all institutional documentation and on the website.

3. Review and revise the general Bachelor of Business and Diploma programme intended learning outcomes, to ensure there is an appropriate distinction between

the outcomes, which reflects the different National Qualifications Framework levels of the two qualifications.

4. Ensure that the intended learning outcomes of all the courses in the programme (core, optional and elective) are appropriately mapped and linked to programme intended learning outcomes, in order to facilitate the measurement of the programme intended learning outcomes and conduct effective programme reviews.

5. Adjust academic staff workloads to ensure they are appropriate and consistent with the Human Resource Management Policy and allow faculty to engage in applied research in line with the Applied Research and Enterprise Activities policy, and the institution's strategic goals.

6. Take action to recruit additional faculty members and provide appropriate incentives to enhance staff retention, to ensure there are sufficient academic staff to teach on the programme.

7. Expedite the issuing of degree certificates and ensure they are issued to graduates in a timely manner.

8. Adhere to the maximum number of students allocated to an academic advisor in line with the Student Support Policy.

9. Extend the external moderation processes outlined in the Assessment and Moderation Policy to all the Bachelor of Business programme majors in order to review and improve courses, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the external moderation arrangements.

10. Review and revise the weighting of the industry supervisor's evaluation in the Cooperative Industry Project and provide appropriate training to industry supervisors to support them in the evaluation of students.

11. Review all policies in line with the institutional policy review schedule outlined in the Policies and Procedures Policy and ensure that all policies are formally approved before being implemented.

12. Implement a formal comprehensive periodic review of the Bachelor of Business programme in line with the institutional Review, Evaluation, and Improvement Policy, which includes input from internal and external stakeholders.

13. Extend benchmarking processes to cover all the Bachelor of Business majors with appropriate and carefully selected regional and/or international institutions using reference points related to academic standards.

14. Develop appropriate terms of reference for the Curriculum Advisory Group which are disseminated to all its members and effectively implemented.

Regularly conduct formal studies on the labour market needs relevant to the Bachelor of Business programme.