

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**Kingdom University
College of Business Administration
Bachelor of Science in Finance and Banking
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 15–17 November 2021
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Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
APRs	Academic Programme Reviews
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre
ARD	Admission and Registration Department
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSFB	Bachelor of Science in Finance & Banking
CBA	College of Business Administration
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CMI	Chartered Management Institute
CQAEC	College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
CTLAC	College Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
FHEA	Fellow of Higher Education Academy
GAs	Graduate Attributes
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IAACGU	Internship, Alumni Affairs and Career Guidance Unit
IAU	Institutional Assessment Unit
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KU	Kingdom University
LBSTATS	Laboratory Tracking System
LMS	Learning Management System

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAA	Quality Assurance Authority
QMS	Quality Management System
SER	Self-evaluation Report
SHFEA	Senior Fellow of Higher Education Academy
SIS	Student Information System
SPAGU	Strategic Planning and Governance Unit
ToR	Terms of Reference

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

Standard 1: The Learning Programme

Standard 2: Efficiency of the Programme

Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

Standard 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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*	Kingdom University
College/ Department*	College of Business Administration
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Science in Finance and Banking
Qualification Approval Number	Higher Education Council (HEC) Letter No. (1633/07) on 13 March 2001
NQF Level	-
Validity Period on NQF	-
Number of Units*	44
NQF Credit	-
Programme Aims*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the students quantitative and qualitative skills in analysing the finance and banking decision situations. • Develop the student's ability to apply advanced techniques and practical skills in the field of finance and banking. • Enable students to appreciate the importance of ethics in finance and banking practice. • Provide opportunities for the students to critically analyze the problems and issues in the management of the bank and financial institutions. • Lead the students to understand the social responsibilities and to participate in the community service. • Provide students with the appropriate employability skills required in the practical business life. • Develop the ability of the students to conduct research into business problems of Finance and Banking. • Develop student's life-long learning skills using Information Communication Technology (ICT). • Develop the student's appreciation of ethics in finance and banking practice • Develop students' efficiency in teamwork, leadership and communication skills.

<p>Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*</p>	<p>Knowledge and Understanding Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a critical understanding of international standards, theories and regulations in Finance and Banking. • Identify the relevant international standards and specialist theories in Finance and Banking. • Explain the principles of Islamic finance and banking. <p>Subject-Specific Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply the finance and banking principles and techniques in real situations. • Assess finance and banking problems using quantitative and qualitative methods. • Apply the appropriate tools and techniques to analyze the Finance and Banking data. <p>Critical Thinking Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze critically financial issues in the banking environment. • Evaluate the financial data and information critically and draw useful inferences for decision making. • Examine the markets for banking and financial instruments and products. • Recognize the recent developments in Finance and Banking and review research articles. <p>General and Transferrable Skills (Other Skills Relevant to Employability and Personal Development)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display ethical behavior and cultural sensitivity in analyzing the financial and banking data, in carrying out research in Finance and Banking and preparation of reports. • Participate in team/individual projects and play a lead role in business research. • Communicate in written reports and orally to peers and seniors on the research or new developments.
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* Mandatory fields

III. Judgment Summary

The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

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

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

IV. Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

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

Judgment: Addressed

- Kingdom University (KU) has a well-designed planning framework in place. The College Teaching Learning and Assessment Committee (CTLAC), Strategic Planning and Governance Unit (SPAGU), Quality Management System (QMS), and College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (CQAEC) are responsible for the planning and implementation of strategies and quality in education and for ensuring that the programme is relevant, fit for purpose and complies with existing regulations set by the Higher Education Council (HEC). The Panel notes that the Bachelor of Science in Finance and Banking (BSFB) started in September 2004; thus, it follows existing licensing regulations. The Panel acknowledges that the programme has been well planned and complies with the requirements of HEC and there is evidence that typical best practices for academic programme development were followed. For instance, the programme has been accredited by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). In addition, the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) has accepted the College of Business Administration (CBA) application, which further enhances learners' exposure to international good practices and provides a richer context to their learning. In addition, the Panel acknowledges that the revised BSFB programme (2018) was reviewed by external reviewers. Furthermore, the Panel notes that regular course evaluations and programme reviews are conducted according to KU's policies and procedure.
- The Panel notes that potential risks to the programme's quality are monitored regularly through the Institutional Risk Policy and Procedure, alongside with the Risk Register of the College, the Department and the associated Risk Mitigation Plan, which considers the potential risks of the programme delivery and academic standards. The Panel received

evidence showing the adjustment made to the risk register at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, where the KU switched all its operation (teaching, assessment, admission & registration, etc.) to virtual mode using its ICT resources. The Panel appreciates the effectiveness of risk management processes in the areas of teaching, research, learning, assessments, and student support during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The Panel notes that the BSFB programme is mapped to the level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and follow the NQF's policies and procedures. These policies and procedures ensure that the programme is compliant with the required number of NQF credits and the procedures of awarding students with the degree's title. In addition, the existing policies and procedures confirm that the CBA must constitute a mapping panel and a confirmation panel. The Panel learned during the interviews, that the BSFB programme is in the process of being placed on the NQF Register at level 8 as it met the validation standards.
- The Panel notes that the qualification title is concise and follows standard terminology. It clearly states its level (Bachelor of Science) and subject area (Finance and Banking). The same title is consistently used on the KU's website, College Handbook and certificates. The programme's qualification is also mapped appropriately to the United Kingdom Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and AACSB standards.
- The BSFB aims are well defined and appropriate for the programme level and subject matter. As per the Self-evaluation Report (SER), the aims indicate the purpose of providing the programme and are embedded in its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). However, the Panel recommends that the CBA should reduce the number of the programme's aims by merging some of them and removing some details to differentiate them from the PILOs. For example, aims 2, 6 and 10 can be merged into one aim.
- The Panel notes that the programme's aims contribute to the achievement of KU mission and strategic goals. During the interviews with faculty, Department Chair and Dean, the Panel learned that goals related to research, and community service are achieved, and the provided evidence shows that the faculty teaching the BSFB programme have produced high impact research in premier journals contributing to the achievement of KU and CBA missions. During the interviews, the Panel also notes that the aims of the programme are reviewed periodically, and the views of the related stakeholders are being taken into consideration.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

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

Judgment: Addressed

- CBA has developed and uses a set of five graduate attributes (GAs) which are specified in the Student Handbook, refined and described in more detail in the supporting statements of skills, knowledge competencies, and behaviors. The Panel learned during the interview that the GAs are associated and measured through the Programme Intended Learning Outcome (PILOs). The Panel also notes that the GAs are communicated effectively to the students. However, the Panel is of the view that the programme internal and external stakeholders such as students, employers, moderators, and the Industrial Advisory Council are not sufficiently involved in designing, developing, and reviewing the achievement of GAs and ILOs. Hence, the Panel recommends that KU should ensure that the programme's internal and external stakeholders are more actively involved in designing, developing, and reviewing the achievement of GAs and ILOs.
- The PILOs are categorized as per BQA's template into four categories comprising Knowledge and Understanding, Subject Specific Skills, Critical Thinking Skills and General and Transferrable Skills. The Panel notes that the PILOs are appropriately written, measurable and aim to develop, relevant knowledge, skills and competencies that can enhance the employability of KU graduates. The Panel is of the view that the PILOs are appropriate for the subject matter and degree type. The Panel is also satisfied that the PILOs are appropriately mapped to the programme aims and meet the NQF requirements.
- The PILOs are stated in the Student Handbook and communicated to students during their orientation/induction sessions. During interviews, the Panel noted that students are aware of the PILOs and academic staff confirmed that the BS BF PILOs are appropriately mapped to the NQF level descriptors. The programme team has also benchmarked the PILOs against local and international programmes and found them appropriate and relevant.
- The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are mapped to the PILOs and NQF level descriptors. The mapping process ensures the alignment between the CILOs, the course contents and the assessment methods. The Panel was provided with the curriculum skills map, which demonstrates the alignment of the courses to each of the PILOs. The Panel notes that the CILOs are appropriately mapped to the PILOs and benchmarked against those of similar courses of other universities. The Panel is satisfied that the CILOs are measurable and achievable, and linked to the teaching and assessment methods.

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

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

Judgment: Addressed

- The BSFB curriculum is designed to provide a progression of learning complexity guided by the NQF levels and credits. The Panel was provided with the revised study plan and noted that the revision process was thorough and extensive. The implemented changes were sufficiently justified and included the replacement of some courses. The Panel notes that the student workload is adequate and there is an appropriate balance of subjects as well as a logical progression of courses. The Panel recognises that the current number of students makes it difficult to offer a wider range of elective courses, however, the Panel suggests widening the range of elective courses. The Panel also notes that the programme is updated based on the feedback received from various stakeholders, such as students, alumni, and the Industry Advisory Council. The programme team benchmarked the programme with similar programmes offered by local, regional and international universities. The ACCA exemptions validate the effectiveness of the curriculum review and its quality.
- The curriculum's design shows balance between knowledge and skills and between theory and practice, as it can be demonstrated through the course title, CILOs, teaching methods, activities and assessments. The curriculum also provides students with flexibility in terms of engaging in the study of specific aspects which may be related to their career aspirations by offering elective courses in addition to a selection of theoretical and practical courses. In addition, the study plan includes a compulsory 3-credit hours graduation project which provides flexibility for the students to opt for research in various topics related to their major. The 3-credit hour internship course is also mandatory and empowers students to acquire a real-world experience and advance their practical skills.
- The Panel notes that the contents of the BSFB programme cover the expected elements sufficiently in terms of depth and breadth. The Panel learned from the interviews that the balance between theory and practice is ensured through several mechanisms which include benchmarking, and external and internal reviews of the curriculum. The course instructors also enhance the depth of the programme through embedding research findings into the courses they teach.
- The BSFB programme is equipped with up-to-date textbooks and references that are appropriate for each course. The Panel learned from the interviews that textbooks and references are updated on a regular basis. The Panel also notes that the university library in coordination with academic staff at the CBA conducts training for students on library usage and on how to access the library databases and search for academic references.

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

- The Panel notes that the Institutional Strategic Plan and the Strategic Academic Plan guide the teaching and learning practices. KU also has a thorough Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure, which is applied to all its programmes. There are university and college level committees that are responsible for the supervision of teaching, learning and assessment related activities. Feedback on learning and teaching is gathered on an annual basis through the course and instructor evaluation forms and satisfaction surveys. The Panel notes that the teaching and learning methods stated in the programme specifications align with the institutional teaching philosophy. The Panel also notes that workshops and training sessions on the Advance Higher Education in academic practices are provided to faculty members. The provided evidence indicates that the academic staff teaching in the programme have either received the Fellow of Higher Education Academy (FHEA) or the Senior Fellow of Higher Education Academy (SHFEA) certifications.
- A variety of teaching methods are used in the programme, including lectures, demonstrations, research projects, group activities, industrial training, and field trips, which the Panel consider appropriate for the BSFB. The Panel was informed during the interviews that teaching is informed by current research and that faculty members incorporate their own research findings in teaching as well as utilize technology to enhance the students' learning experiences and develop their employability and entrepreneurial skills. The Panel appreciates that the programme uses several notable teaching pedagogies, including guest lectures, role-plays, case studies, audio-visuals and current research findings.
- In addition to the Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure, KU has the E-Learning Guideline, which includes related regulations and supports the attainment of the BSFB ILOs. The Panel was informed during the interviews that KU Learning Management System (LMS) improves the learning experience of the students and has facilitated the transition to distance learning during the pandemic. The Panel notes that the lectures are video recorded, and students have access to online resources (e.g., Pearson 'MyEconLab' and 'MyManagementLab') that are directly linked to the textbooks allocated for several courses, which allow them to exercise self-assessment and manage their own learning.
- The Panel notes that the academic staff have industry and professional experience and are trained in how to create a student- focused teaching and learning environment. In addition, the Panel notes that the BSFB programme strengthens the students' research capabilities and promotes lifelong learning through offering research courses (Research

Methods and Graduation Projects), library support, research workshops, and creation of research circles. During interviews with the students and faculty, the Panel learned that KU teaching and learning culture is driven by personal responsibility and autonomous learning. Students are trained to be lifelong learners and KU/CBA support and encourage them to create and innovate. The Panel notes that students have won the 'INJAZ' and 'Almalga' local and regional entrepreneurial competitions for 'Best Product Award' and 'Best Social Impact Award'. Furthermore, students won the Young Entrepreneurs Competition in 2020. Professional and practical skills are further enhanced through exposure to career workshops, scientific visits, and social service volunteering. The Panel appreciates that KU learning environment motivate the students to innovate and create and to enhance their practical skills.

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

- KU has a clear institutional assessment framework, which ensures that assessment processes are rigorously implemented and consistent with requirements of the HEC and BQA. This framework is reflected in several policies and procedures such as the Assessment and Moderation Policy, the Assessment Procedure, the Assessment Moderation Procedure and the Assessment Appeal Procedure. Regular workshops on assessments are conducted to ensure that the academic staff are well-aware of the related policies and procedures, which are accessible for all academic and administrative staff through the KU's intranet portal. A summary of the assessment policies and procedures is available in the Student Handbook. The Panel learned during interviews that the programme specifications and assessment processes are explained to the students during their induction and that the Admission and Registration Department (ARD) keep them informed about any updates. In addition, the Panel learned from the interviews that the assessment policies and procedures are disseminated to the external moderators.
- Assessments include assignment reports, case studies, quizzes, oral presentations and written examinations. The assessment formative and summative functions are clearly stated in the related KU policies. The marking criteria, assessment schedules and the weight of the assessments are stated in the course specification documents which are disseminated to students at the beginning of the academic semester. The Panel notes the clarity of the mapping between assessments and the CILOs in the course specification documents. The LMS is used to convey feedback to the students on their assessments. During interviews with students, the Panel confirmed that they receive timely and

adequate feedback on their performance and that faculty help students in identifying areas for improvement.

- The Assessment and Moderation Policy, the Assessment Procedure, and the Assessment Moderation Procedure include provisions that ensure the transparency and fairness of grading student's achievements. During the interviews, the Panel confirmed that these policies are available to the relevant stakeholders and are being implemented.
- The Panel notes that the University and the College are committed to maintaining ethical standards. The University Research Policy guides ethical rules and practices among staff and students. The BSFB programme teaches basic research principles, through its two research courses, namely Research Methods and Graduation Project, and engages students in research-based inquiry. Additionally, the Panel notes that the University utilises Turnitin to promote ethical practices among students and check plagiarism. The University informs students about the importance of ethical practices through the Student Handbook and during student orientation/ induction sessions. The College Academic Misconduct Committee handles reported cases of academic plagiarism. Penalties are levied for academic misconduct according to the Plagiarism Policy and Procedure and reported cases are dealt with accordingly.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- The admission criteria and processes are outlined in the Admission Policy and Admission Procedure. The Panel notes that the admission requirements are fit for purpose, detailed, and published in the Student Handbook and the university website. The number of male and female students indicate demographics' equality and gender balance. From the interviews, the Panel learned that the College Admission Committee work closely with ARD to ensure that applicants are treated equally and to safeguard the wellbeing of prospective students with special needs. Furthermore, applicants have the right to appeal against the outcome of an admission decision. The process is fair and transparent; however, it is difficult to evaluate its effectiveness due to the low number of the BSFB students. From interviews, the Panel notes that the policies and procedures are consistently implemented and that the Admission Policy is regularly reviewed and updated, as evidenced by the dates stated on the policy. The Panel also notes that the policy and regulations updates are promptly communicated to students and other stakeholders.
- The essential admission criteria include a cumulative high school average of 60% or higher. The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Center (AQAC) conducts placement tests to assess the student's English proficiency and mathematical skills. An applicant must secure at least 60/100 in the English test and 35/60 in the Mathematics test to be admitted to the BSFB programme. Applicants with IELTS score of 5.5 or above or a TOEFL score of 550 or above are exempted from the English Test.
- Students who do not meet the admission requirements are placed in a foundation programme, which consists of two remedial English and Mathematics courses. However, it is not clear how this programme (Foundation) ensures that students who passed the

foundation have attained the required level of English / Mathematics that qualify them to be admitted to the BSFB programme. The Panel recommends that KU should develop clear guidelines regarding exceptions to the admission requirements and regularly assess the effectiveness of the foundation programme.

- The Panel notes that KU has an Institutional Assessment Policy and Procedure to monitor and assess student progression and completion of degree requirements. Furthermore, the Panel learned that CBA facilitates internal and external transfers as per the HEC regulations. Students from other higher education institutions can transfer credits to the BSFB programme using equivalency forms. To qualify for transfer, the students should have completed the programme within seven years with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) not less than 2.0. For specific course transfers, the students should have achieved a minimum of C grade. In addition, the course content should match at least 70% of the course.
- The admission criteria and processes that are outlined in the Admission Policy and Procedure have been benchmarked with the admission requirements of other local and international universities. The Panel notes that, like other policies, the Admission Policy is reviewed regularly based on reports of the University Admission Committee, and the Institutional Assessment Unit (IAU), as well as feedback received from internal and external stakeholders.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

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

Judgment: Addressed

- KU has several policies and procedures for recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion of academic staff. These specify criteria for recruitments, faculty evaluations, contract renewals, promotions, retention of academic staff, community services, attendance and annual leaves. The Human Resources Manual and Faculty Handbook are the main reference documents that help academic staff to understand KU internal regulations, their rights, and professional code of conducts. As per KU Induction Policy and Procedure, newly appointed staff are offered an orientation programme, which is organized by the Human Resources Department and CBA. The Department Chairperson is also responsible for familiarizing new faculty members with the teaching, learning and assessment processes that need to be followed at the Department.

- Academic staff members are appraised on teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Elements examined in the annual appraisal include student evaluations, class observations and attainment of goals set by the Department Chairperson for the evaluation purposes. KU also has an Academic Staff Promotion Policy and Procedure, which includes eligibility criteria for applying for a promotion, criteria for selecting the promotion committee and criteria used in evaluating applicants. However, unlike the academic staff appraisal, the principal criterion for promotion is the research output both in terms of quality and quantity. The Panel recommends that KU should ensure that academic staff appraisals and promotions are effectively linked through clear common criteria for evaluation.
- The Panel notes that KU has a Research Policy and Procedure, which supports research publications. At the university level, there is a Research Unit which is responsible for enacting the Research Council's decisions. The Research Unit at the college level guides the implementation of the college's annual research plan. During interviews, the Panel learned that faculty research output has doubled in 2020.
- KU has a workload allocation model, which is consistent with regulations. It indicates that the teaching load for professors is nine hours, associate professor 12 hours, and for the ranks of assistant professor, Lecturers, and instructors 15 hours per week. From interviews, the Panel learned that administrative tasks assigned to faculty members can result in a reduction of the teaching loads by 3-credit hours. Normally academic staff reserve at least 20% of their time to research and scholarly activities. The Panel also learned that as per the Bahraini labour law, KU supports women staff by providing them with a supportive environment such as a 60 day maternity leave and a baby care hours (2 hours per day up to the age of six months and one hour per day until the child's first birthday).
- The number of academic staff members is sufficient and there is a quite high faculty to student ratio because of the relatively small number of students. The CBA team consists of 11 academic staff with an appropriate range of educational qualifications, specializations, and professional experience. They hold a rank from Lecturer to Full Professor.
- KU has a Staff Development Unit, which is responsible for developing an annual staff development plan based on inputs received from the different Colleges, Departments, Centres and Units. The training needs are also derived from staff performance appraisals and the training courses are monitored and evaluated by faculty members and administrative staff. In addition, CBA support and facilitates staff member's attainment of professional qualifications such as advanced HE fellowship and certification courses such as Fintech and AI. The Panel appreciates CBA's efforts towards the professional development of faculty members and the fact that most of the faculty members are fellows or senior fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA), UK.

- The Panel notes that KU provides an appropriate supportive environment for its staff. The measures include transparent policies and procedures in relation to staff appraisal and promotion, research opportunities and support, and staff development opportunities. The Panel noted during the interviews with faculty members that they are satisfied with the provisions provided by CBA and KU. Furthermore, the administrative and academic staff turnover is very low and most of the staff spend a good number of years employed by KU.

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

- CBA has 28 classrooms and two laboratories that are adequately equipped with the necessary software and meet the requirements of the HEC and the ACCA for programme accreditation. Given the small number of students in each cohort, the standard size classrooms, laboratories, and computing facilities are sufficient. The Panel notes that the Information Technology (IT) facilities are also adequate and provide students with the support they need (e.g., emails, Wi-Fi, computer laboratories, etc.). The ICT Department runs a ticketing system-enabled IT help desk which receives and addresses all IT-related incidents and supports students and staff in maintaining the quality of IT infrastructure and associated services. Students and staff confirmed during the interviews that IT facilities and the LMS meet their needs and support teaching, learning and assessment processes.
- KU has an adequate standard size Library with appropriate facilities for students comprising both formal and informal study spaces. It consists of a circulation counter, general study area, collection display area, periodical section, research study carrels, technical services area, and personal computer workstations. The Panel notes that the book collections and electronic databases are adequate to serve the needs of KU staff and students. The Panel confirmed in the interview with the library team that the electronic journals from premium databases such as ProQuest, Springer, ABI, and Emerald are available to students and staff. The provision has been enhanced to integrate support for e-learning with the digitalization of some of its services and access to digital publications. KU has implemented a Library Management policy to provide a coherent operational framework for the functions of acquisition, library membership, circulation, course reserves and stock of the library collection.
- KU has a Resources Committee chaired by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research with clear terms of reference (ToR) to evaluate and ensure that

resources and facilities are adequate. This committee works closely with the Procurement and Services Department, the ICT Department, and the Human Resources Department. The library also monitors and evaluates the adequacy and quality of its learning resources through the satisfaction surveys of staff and students.

- KU has an Occupational Health and Safety Procedure in place, that includes clear lines of responsibility for operational health and safety by relevant committees, training procedures, and fire and emergency evacuation, reporting and auditing to ensure the health and safety of students and staff on campus. KU also has a Health and Safety Handbook, which is available to all stakeholders. Furthermore, KU has appointed an Occupational Health and Safety Officer who is responsible for conducting a comprehensive induction for staff and students on all aspects of safety in the workplace. In addition, KU has a fire marshal and a medical clinic with a nurse on duty.

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

- KU has a Management Information System (MIS), which is custom-built and supports the institutional resource planning and decision-making processes. It also facilitates the management of day-to-day tasks and functions that are carried out by the different departments and units such as those conducted by ARD, Financial Resources Department, Purchasing and Services Department, and Human Resources Department. The MIS consists of several modules and a Student Information System (SIS).
- The Panel notes that KU utilizes tracking reports/data of laboratories, e-learning, e-resources, etc.. These tracking reports are considered by the management team in ensuring that the resources are fully utilized. In addition, KU subscribes to Lab Tracking System (LABSTATS), which helps tracking the utilization of laboratories and e-resources. LABSTATS generates five reports including student logins in laboratories that enable informed decision-making on resource planning.
- KU has developed and consistently implemented several policies and procedures including the Record Retention and Disposal Policy, the Certification Policy and Procedure, and the Archiving Procedure to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results. The Panel notes the effectiveness of the SIS system in ensuring the accuracy of results and the security of the student records, which are protected through usernames and passwords.

- Certificates are awarded on successful completion of all required courses, credit hours and achievement of the required CGPA, as per the HEC regulations and KU Certification Policy and Procedure. Students' certificates and transcripts are generated by the SIS system and approved by the University Council. During the virtual site visit interviews, KU staff and alumni confirmed that only graduates meeting all degree requirements receive an award and the certificates are issued promptly.

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

- Several support services, particularly in e-learning, library, laboratories, special learning needs, pastoral care and general welfare are available to students. The Panel notes the positive role of the library in helping new students through induction sessions and in offering lending, print, photocopying and inter library loan services. KU also offers classrooms equipped with multimedia and smart projectors, computer laboratories, counselling services, medical care, parking, and support for students with special needs.
- KU has a Student Career Guidance Policy and Procedure, which ensures that students are provided with adequate support in planning for their career paths. In addition, this policy supports the employability of KU graduates. The University has also constituted an Internship, Alumni Affairs and Career Guidance Unit (IAACGU), which organizes several workshops to assist students in making decisions related to their career and to improve employability.
- KU organizes induction sessions for newly admitted students including those transferring from other universities. These sessions are organized by the Student Affairs Department during the Orientation Day, which is conducted at the beginning of each semester. The Panel confirmed in interviews with students that they are benefiting from the induction sessions, which help to introduce them to the support services and facilities available at KU and that they are familiar with KU rules and regulations and academic expectations.
- The Panel notes that KU has an advising policy where each student is assigned an academic advisor who supports the student on academic and non-academic matters from enrolment in the University until graduation. However, the Panel through the evidence provided and during the interviews with students and academic advisors could not ascertain the effectiveness of academic advising in guiding students in achieving GAs and the programme's ILOs. The Panel is of the view that academic advising support is

necessary in guiding students in achieving GAs and the process should be supported by various stakeholders. The Panel recommends that KU should establish mechanisms to ensure that academic advising supports students in achieving GAs and ILOs.

- The Panel notes that KU is committed to providing equal opportunities for both genders; this is clearly highlighted in the Student Welfare, Support and Guidance Policy. The Policy aims to provide a general framework for addressing student issues. The provided support takes care of pregnant women allowing mitigation procedures and child welfare commitments, as well as mental and social wellbeing.
- KU has formal arrangements to support and monitor students at risk of academic failure. As per the Student Academically At-Risk Policy and Procedure, at-risk students are identified through the LMS and their academic advisors develop an action plan in coordination with these students to help guide them and improve their performance.
- The Panel notes that the University assesses the adequacy of the student support services through student satisfaction surveys. The Panel confirmed in the interviews with students that those services are regularly assessed according to students' feedback and needs. All the surveys conducted are analyzed along with improvement plans being developed and implemented to address the identified areas for enhancement. During the interviews, the Panel also learned that special effort is made to accommodate students with special needs.

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

- CBA has appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure that its assessment approaches are suitable for the course levels and are comparable to those used in other higher education institutions and in relevant professional examinations. The Panel notes that all assessments are set and conducted in accordance with KU Assessment and Moderation Policy, Assessment Procedure, and Assessment Moderation Procedure. The validity and the reliability of assessments are thoroughly checked by the relevant stakeholders. The Panel learned during the interviews with the faculty and the quality assurance team that assessments are designed to facilitate the achievement of course and programme ILOs and to meet the academic standards in terms of complexity and rigour.
- The alignment of assessments with ILOs and GAs are regularly checked by faculty and external moderators in line with the KU Assessment and Moderation Policy and Assessment Moderation Procedure. The Panel notes that this process is dynamic and course specifications change frequently in order to assure a good match between students' achievements and CILOs and the alignment of CILOs with PILOs. The Panel was provided with a sample of graded assessments which demonstrates the variety of the assessment methods used to assess ILOs at the course level. The assessment results are uploaded on LMS, which generates achievement reports that illustrate the accomplishment of CILOs and PILOs.
- The Panel notes that there are adequate mechanisms for monitoring and improving the assessment processes. AQAC monitors the implementation of the assessment policies and procedures. Assessments are checked by internal and external moderators and CTLAC ensures that the internal and external feedback is reflected in the modified assessments.

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

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

Judgment: *Partially Addressed*

- KU maintains ethical research standards through its Research Policy and Procedure. The Plagiarism Policy and Procedure guides CBA practices on maintaining academic integrity and standards. These policies and procedures are communicated to students through the Student Handbook and dedicated research sessions for graduation projects to ensure that students are well-aware of the different forms of academic misconduct and the related penalties. The Panel noted during the interviews with CBA students and staff that policies and procedures related to academic integrity and research ethics are clear and well-disseminated to the relevant stakeholders.
- The Panel was provided with samples of Turnitin reports and minutes of meetings of the College Misconduct Committee which handles the related cases in line with KU policies and procedures and its actions are being recorded. However, during the interviews with faculty, students, and the quality assurance team, there wasn't an agreement between them on the permissible percentage of the similarity and the applicable penalty for each form of academic misconduct. The Panel recommends that CBA should improve reporting, recording, and disseminating information related to academic misconduct. The Panel also recognizes the challenges of the current distance learning environment in deterring and detecting the different forms of academic misconduct, such as cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work. The Panel recommends that KU should strengthen, with the assistance of new technologies, the methods applied for deterring and detecting plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct in the current distant/ blended learning environment.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

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

Judgment: *Addressed*

- The CTLAC conducts pre and post internal moderation of assessments. The Panel was provided with samples of internal pre-moderation of major examination papers samples of post internal mark moderation of major examinations and samples of internal moderation comments considered by course instructors. The Panel notes that the internal

moderation contributes to the review and improvement of both courses and the programme and ensures consistent assessments and fairness of grading. The Panel also notes that the findings of the pre and post internal moderation of assessments are considered in the annual review of the programme and discussed in the meetings of the Department and College Councils. The Chair of CTLAC prepares an annual report on the internal and external moderation of assessments and suggests improvements wherever required. The Panel is satisfied with the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation procedures.

- KU has a formal and appropriate procedure for the selection and appointment of external moderators, which is based on their areas of expertise and academic qualifications. The CTLAC prepares a list of external moderators, which is discussed at the Department Council and approved by the College Council. The Panel was provided with the CVs of external moderators, samples of external pre-moderation reports, samples of course portfolio moderation reports, and samples of CTLAC minutes of meetings discussing the comments of external moderators. The Panel notes that the external moderation contributes to the review and improvement of courses and ensures that assessments and grading meet the relevant professional and academic standards. The Panel also notes that the programme team considers the comments and feedback received from external moderators, which are incorporated in the annual review reports and improvement plans.
- The effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation is evaluated on different levels (department, college and institution). The moderation reports prepared by the Chair of CTLAC are discussed in the meetings of the Department and College Councils. Annual improvement plans are prepared by the Chair of the CTLAC based on the findings of internal and external moderation. The improvement plans are overseen and monitored by the College Council and AQAC.

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

- KU has a comprehensive Internship Policy and Procedure that guides the work-based learning component of the BSFB programme. The Panel notes that industrial training is compulsory for the programme and no exemptions are given. Students who have completed 84 credit hours are allowed to register in the 3-credit hours industrial training course. They are required to complete 240 hours of industrial training. The College Internship Committee manages the work-based learning process and ensures the

implementation of the related policy and procedure. The IAACGU also monitors the work-based learning process at the institutional level and ensures that students were provided with equivalent training opportunities that enhance their practical skills.

- The IAACGU and the College Internship Committee have clear ToRs. The Internship Policy and Procedure defines the roles and the responsibilities of the academic advisors and industry internship coordinators (field supervisors), which are communicated to all parties through the SharePoint portal and emails. KU approaches business firms requesting industrial training for its students. Once the training requests are accepted, CBA appoints the academic advisors, while the business firms allocate the field supervisors to oversee and monitor students' training. The academic advisors and field supervisors communicate *via* an electronic medium to discuss the students' progress during the pandemic, while the usual practice is a physical visit by the academic advisors to the workplace.
- The ILOs of the internship course are mapped against three PILOs and their attainment contributes towards the achievement of the programme's aims and GAs. During the interviews with field supervisors, students and alumni, the Panel was able to confirm that the assessment of the work-based learning is well managed and ensures the achievement of the ILOs at the course and programme levels. Students are required to submit four-weekly reports on their work-based learning and a comprehensive written report and an oral presentation after completing their training. The Panel was provided with samples of these written reports and presentations in addition to samples of industrial training forms filled by academic advisors and field supervisors which are used in the evaluation of the performance of each student.
- The effectiveness of work-based learning is evaluated through the evaluation/feedback survey forms which are filled by the field supervisors and students. to reflect their experiences and whether the related policy and procedure was followed. The Panel noted during interview that KU is communicating well with its industry partners, in terms of the work-based learning and the feedback received is used to improve the work placements and training opportunities.

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 graduation project is a compulsory component of the BSFB programme, which contributes to the achievement of the programme's aims and ILOs. Students who have completed 108 credit hours and the pre-requisite research methods course are eligible to register in the capstone project course. The roles and responsibilities of students and their academic supervisors are clearly stated in the Graduation Project Procedure. The academic supervisors monitor the student progress, grade the assessments and send the results to the Chair of the Department. Students are required to attend research seminars, meet their supervisor regularly and submit the projects on time. The Panel notes from the interviews that the procedure is well-disseminated to the relevant stakeholders and the related processes are being followed.
- The Panel notes that the assessment of the graduation projects is clear, detailed and on par with academic norms and practices. The ILOs of the graduation project are mapped to the BSFB ILOs. Marking rubrics are used in the evaluation of the graduation projects, awarding 80 percent to the written work and 20 percent to the oral presentation. The projects are marked both by the academic supervisor (60 percent) and a second marker/academic staff member (40 percent), who is not involved in the supervision of students, which ensures the fairness and the accuracy of the assessment process.
- Surveys are used to assess student satisfaction and monitor the supervision process. Student feedback is collated and subsequently discussed in the meetings of the Department and College Councils. An annual improvement plan is prepared by the programme team whenever the feedback requires an action to be taken to improve the supervision process and students' experience. During the interviews with the academic staff, alumni and students, the Panel noted that they are generally satisfied with the resources available to carry out their research and graduation projects.

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

- KU has policies and procedures in place to ensure that students' work is assessed appropriately, and that the granted grades are fair and reflect the level of students' achievements at the different courses. The Panel was provided with CILOs and PILOs achievement reports, samples of assessed examinations and graduation projects. Based on the provided evidence and the interviews with alumni and employers, the Panel is satisfied that the level of students' achievements is adequate.

- The Panel notes that although the number of admitted students is low ranging from two in 2015 to 10 in 2019, the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates is high (100%). The retention rates are also high reaching 100% in 2019 and the average length of study for graduated students is 4 years. KU is also effectively maintaining contact with its alumni through IAACGU to collate graduates' destination data and monitor their career progression. The alumni and employers' surveys, which are regularly conducted by IAACGU indicate that the employers and graduates are highly satisfied with the graduates' profile. During the interviews with alumni and employers, the Panel was informed that BSFB graduates have adequately gained employability skills and the learning environment motivates students to enhance their practical skills. Furthermore, based on a study that was conducted by a consultancy firm on behalf of KU, out of 187 BSFB graduates, 91% were employed and 16% have undertaken further studies.

Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

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

Judgment: Addressed

- KU Strategic Academic Planning and Review Framework, Academic Plan (2017-2022) and Research Plan guide the institutional and the CBA operational plans. In addition to the institutional policies and procedures which are in place. KU has an overarching Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy. These policies and procedures include the Teaching and Learning Policy, Research Policy Assessment Policy, Assessment and Moderation Policy and Procedure, and Assessment Appeal Procedure. KU also has developed an overall Policy and Procedure Development Framework which requires a 3-year review of all KU policies and procedures or when deemed appropriate by the relevant stakeholders in the University. The Panel notes that policies and procedures are communicated to the relevant internal and external stakeholders through the KU SharePoint portal, website, notice boards, emails, meetings and workshops. The related manuals, handbooks and catalogues/guidelines are circulated to the relevant stakeholders.
- KU has a clear organizational structure of quality assessment and enhancement with specific roles assigned to all stakeholders involved. The central role of AQAC is evidenced and operates across all levels of the University through two subunits, which are the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Unit and IAU. The Panel notes that the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (CQAEC) implements the QMS at the college level with a clear remit of responsibilities in this regard and clear links back to the university level quality assurance units.
- The Annual Internal Audit Procedure and Institutional Strategic Planning and Review Procedure are in place to ensure consistent application of external and university quality assurance requirements. The Panel is satisfied that there are evidenced mechanisms that include audit schedule, Audit checklist, pre-audit consultations and preparations resulting in improvement plans and progress reports. The Panel notes the use of a

professional audit firm, which was appointed by the Board of Trustees, to conduct audits of administrative departments.

- As per the SER, KU staff have access to all institutional policies, procedures and documents, which are centrally recorded, published and communicated through the SPAGU SharePoint portal. KU ensures that its staff understand these policies and procedures as well as their role in ensuring the quality of provision through the staff induction process, mentoring, coaching, awareness sessions and formal meetings. During the virtual site visit interviews, the administrative and academic staff confirmed that these practices are in place. The Panel also notes the existence of an institutional culture of quality assurance and quality enhancement as a result of frequent engagement with quality assurance processes.
- The Panel notes that KU QMS is monitored and reviewed by AQAC and its subunits. During the academic years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, a total of 32 revisions and eight newly developed policies, procedures and manuals were executed. The monitoring, evaluation and improvement activities and practices are echoed in the interviews with KU staff which leads the Panel conclude that the practice that is outlined in the SER is in place. The SER lists examples of interventions with regards to quality enhancement in ICT facilities (e.g., examinations, blended delivery, remote access, account login and email security) and physical facilities based on student surveys. The Panel further notes that the College Council has a careful oversight over and effectively supports, QMS activities.

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*

- CBA organizational structure and reporting lines are clearly described in the University Bylaws. KU has an Authority Matrix that is used as a tool to manage governance, communications and working relationships through the formal organizational structure. The Panel notes the availability of a clear organogram on the KU website and SharePoint portal. The Panel also notes that the job descriptions of managerial posts (e.g., Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research, College Dean, Department Chairperson, Course Coordinator, etc.) are well-defined in terms of their core responsibilities. During the virtual site visit interviews, the supporting role of the AQAC and SPAGU was clearly confirmed, and the role of the Department Chairperson was presented as critically important for effective development and delivery of the programmes. The College Council and Department Council also ensure the implementation of KU policies and procedures at the programme level.

- The ToR of the different councils and committees are clearly described in the University Bylaws and the University & College Level Committees ToRs. The Panel notes that KU has 13 university and 10 college level standing committees with clear mandates. The provided evidence includes evaluation reports of the effectiveness of KU committees by senior management, which have resulted in introducing some changes where necessary following a feedback process.
- The custodianship of the academic standards of the programme rest on different levels. The Vice President of Academic Affairs and Scientific Research, supported by AQAC and SPAGU, is responsible for ensuring the quality and integrity of the academic programmes and providing academic leadership. The College Dean has a general responsibility for overseeing the management of academic programmes and ensuring sufficient deployment of resources. The Department Chairperson, Programme Managers and Course coordinators assure that the delivery of the academic programmes is in line with the programme specifications and that the ILOs are appropriately addressed and assessed. The Panel notes from the interviews that the academic staff and senior management are well aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

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

Judgment: Addressed

- KU has a Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy and a Programme Review Procedure. The Panel was provided with annual programme review reports, improvement plans and progress reports. The Panel notes that the primary consideration is given to the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment processes whereby multiple sources are used as inputs, including course assessment results and the feedback received from students, staff, councils and committees. The Panel also notes that there are various committees involved in the annual evaluation of programmes at the department and college levels. Based on the provided evidence and the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel is satisfied that there is a high involvement of various stakeholders in the monitoring of annual programme reviews and the implementation of the annual improvement plans which are discussed and approved at the Department Council and the College Council.
- The periodic review of the programme is conducted every five years or when deemed necessary in line with the Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy, and the Programme Review Procedure. The College Dean initiates the periodic review process

by establishing a Periodic Programme Review Committee, which is expected to gather its data from a substantial number of sources including previous reviews, improvement plans, internal and external moderation reports, benchmarking studies, instructor and course evaluation forms, stakeholder satisfaction surveys and the feedback received from the College Industry Advisory Council. The Periodic Programme Review Committee prepares a justification table with respect to the proposed changes at the course and programme levels. The Panel notes that local, regional and international academic experts are involved in reviewing the programmes' revised study plan drafts.

- The Panel notes that there are formal arrangements in place to ensure that the periodic reviews comply with HEC and BQA requirements and are in line with KU policies and procedures. As per the SER and the provided evidence, the programme periodic reviews, and related improvement plans are overseen and monitored by the College Council and the AQAC.

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

- KU has a Benchmarking Policy and Procedure, which clarifies the benchmarking purpose, scope and processes. The institutions selected for the benchmarking purpose include local, regional and international universities that offer similar business programmes. The Panel notes that not all the selected universities are well-recognized, and their characteristics are not similar to KU in terms of size and operations. The Panel recommends that KU should revise the Benchmarking Policy and Procedure to ensure that the selected universities are well-recognized and share similar characteristics with KU.
- The Panel recognizes the initial efforts of KU around international accreditations including the eligibility for AACSB accreditation and membership therein, ACCA exemptions, Chartered Management Institute (CMI) test center accreditation and CMI certificate for students. The Panel also notes that benchmarking informs decisions on various aspects of the programme such as ILOs, curriculum content, admission criteria, ICT resources and facilities, etc... During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel found that the benchmarking efforts can be used in a stronger sense to inform decision making beyond offering additional courses.
- The Panel also notes that although the benchmarking scope includes entry requirements and programme academic standards, the data used is limited to the information published

on the website of these universities and the benchmarking scope needs to be expanded. The SER states intentions to improve the rigour of data that the CBA benchmark against, through memorandum of understanding with other universities to enhance deeper engagement and sharing of best practices. The Panel notes KU has signed a memorandum of understanding with two local Universities and formal benchmarking has been initiated with one regional institution. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that the KU should expand the benchmarking activities beyond web-based benchmarking to enhance the university's operations, policies and procedures related to teaching, learning, assessments and academic advising among other aspects that KU aspires to enhance and improve such as graduate attributes and research.

- The Panel notes that the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy sets clear mechanisms for collecting regular feedback from the programme internal and external stakeholders (academic and administrative staff, students, employers and Alumni) through various approaches. Academic staff engage in course and programme reviews and provide their feedback for improvement on internal professional development activities. KU staff and students also take part in ICT and library satisfaction surveys about the quality of the services provided. Furthermore, there is an annual employee satisfaction survey, and an annual performance appraisal for academic and administrative staff. Students' feedback is captured through course and instructor evaluation forms, annual student satisfaction surveys and student representation on university and college committees. The feedback of alumni and employers is secured through the meetings of the College Industry Advisory Council and the use of alumni and employer surveys, which are conducted every three years.
- The comments and information received from different stakeholders are collated in a report format by the IAU for each of the surveys along with a draft improvement plan that are finalized and approved by the concerned colleges and departments. The IAU circulates and discusses stakeholders' feedback with College Deans, Department Chairs and the heads of the relevant admin departments and other units. The discussions of survey results take place in formal meetings and the concerned parties agree on the actions to be taken and that are included in their improvement plans. The Panel notes that these results are used in different contexts such as the annual and periodic programme reviews and the evaluation of KU facilities and services. The Panel also notes the use of the Student Council to provide feedback to students on the survey findings, improvement plans or other actions alongside a form-based process to expedite suggestions and complaints on basis of urgency. Furthermore, staff feedback, improvement plans, and progress thereon are posted on the SharePoint portal.
- The Panel was informed during the virtual site interviews that KU keeps the external members of CIAC updated during their meetings about the progress achieved in addressing their recommendations. External regulatory bodies are informed about the

actions taken by KU through improvement plans, progress reports, and monthly and annual reports. Furthermore, the Panel noted during these interviews that stakeholders (e.g., students, alumni, external moderators, project supervisors and employers) are satisfied with the changes implemented based on their feedback.

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

- CBA has a functioning Industry Advisory Council with clear ToR that specify the council members' responsibilities. The Panel notes that its membership includes alumni, employers and discipline experts and its meetings are conducted twice a year. The Panel notes that their feedback is recorded in the minutes of meetings and passed on to relevant departments, committees and councils for decision making in accordance with the discussed matter. The Panel was provided with examples of actions taken based on the recommendations of the Industry Advisory Council such as adding two courses to the latest version of the programme.
- CBA ensures that its programmes meet labour market, national and societal needs through the feedback and comments received from the Industrial Advisory Council, and the use of alumni and employer surveys. The surveys indicate the need to introduce new courses in Taxation, Entrepreneurial Finance and Venture Capital, Electronic Banking, Islamic Insurance, and Financial Services Marketing. CBA has also benefited from two published reports namely: Allen Consulting Group Skills Gap (2009) and Tamkeen Market Intelligence Review (2020) in identifying the cores skills required in the local and regional labour market. In addition, CBA works closely with IAU and AQAC to ensure that the applied mechanisms are monitored and reviewed in line with Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy.

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 Science in Finance & Banking of College of Business Administration offered by the Kingdom University.

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

1. The effectiveness of risk management processes in the areas of teaching, research, learning, assessments, and student support during the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. The programme uses several notable teaching pedagogies, including guest lectures, role-plays, case studies, and audio-visuals and current research findings.
3. The learning environment motivates the students to innovate and create and enhance their practical skills.
4. The College of Business Administration's efforts towards the professional development of faculty members and the fact that most of the faculty members are fellows or senior fellows of the Higher Education Academy, UK.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that Kingdom University and/ or the College of Business Administration should:

1. Shorten the programme aims to six by removing some details to differentiate them from the Programme Learning Outcomes. For example, aims 2, 6 and 10 can be merged into one aim.
2. Ensure that the programme's internal and external stakeholders are more actively involved in designing, developing, and reviewing the achievement of graduate attributes and intended learning outcomes.
3. Develop clear guidelines regarding exceptions to the admission requirements and regularly assess the effectiveness of the foundation programme.
4. Ensure that academic staff appraisals and promotions are effectively linked through clear common criteria for evaluation.
5. Establish mechanisms to ensure that academic advising supports students in achieving the graduate attributes and intended learning outcomes.

6. Improve reporting, recording, and disseminating information related to academic misconduct.
7. Strengthen with the assistance of new technologies, the methods applied for deterring and detecting plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct in the current distant/ blended learning environment.
8. Revise the Benchmarking Policy and Procedure to ensure that the selected universities are well-recognized and share similar characteristics with Kingdom University.
9. Expand the benchmarking activities beyond web-based benchmarking to enhance the university's operations, policies and procedures related to teaching, learning, assessments and academic advising among other aspects that the Kingdom University aspires to enhance and improve such as graduate attributes and research.