



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

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report**

**Gulf University  
College of Administrative and Financial Sciences  
Bachelor in Human Resources Management  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 24-26 October 2021**

**HA025-C3-R025**

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## Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
APRs	Academic Programme Reviews
BHRM	Bachelor of Human Resources Management
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, UK
CQAC	College Quality Assurance Committee
CTLAC	College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GAs	Graduate Attributes
GU	Gulf University
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
ICDO	Internship and Career Development Office
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes

IT	Information Technology
LMS	Learning Management System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PIAB	Programme Industrial Advisory Board
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency, UK
QADC	Quality Assurance and Development Centre
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SHRM	Society for Human Resource Management
SIS	Student Information System
ToR	Terms of Reference
UQAC	University Quality Assurance Committee
UTLAC	University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee

## 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 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**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
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 <b>Standard 1</b> 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 the 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*	Gulf University
College/ Department*	College of Administrative and Financial Sciences Administrative Sciences Department
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor in Human Resources Management
Qualification Approval Number	Cabinet Decision No. (1649-03)
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Validation Date
Number of Units*	49
NQF Credit	520
Programme Aims*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide specialized knowledge of human resource management, including techniques, theories, business models and ethical principles required to pursue a profession and continue post-graduate study</li> <li>2. Enhance student's ability to apply generalized and specialized knowledge, skills and competence to a wide variety of practical scenarios in the local, regional and global business environment</li> <li>3. Enable students to apply research and theoretical knowledge in professional practice within contemporary organizations</li> <li>4. Foster student's understanding of diversity, culture, globalization, social responsibility and ethics in business</li> <li>5. Develop student's skills in technological agility, including decision making and integrating current and emerging technologies within business contexts</li> <li>6. Provide students with learning environment needed to develop professional and technological skills to satisfy labor market needs</li> <li>7. Cultivate transferrable skills on leadership, collaboration, problem solving, communication, analytical thinking, independent and life-long learning to enhance employability and adapt to rapidly changing environments</li> </ol>

Programme Learning Outcomes*	Intended
	<p><b>Knowledge: Theoretical Understanding:</b></p> <p>After successful completion of the programme, the student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of theories, models, principles of business, economics, accounting &amp; finance, marketing, and other domains of management which support human resource management functions to meet the expectations of stakeholders in a complex business environment.</li> <li>- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of specialised HRM theories, principles, practices to identify the role of HR in formulating and implementing HR strategy in alignment with business initiatives to sustain organizational competitive advantage.</li> <li>- Describe impact of globalization, technology and contemporary issues on HR strategies and practices.</li> </ul> <p><b>Knowledge: Practical Application</b></p> <p>After successful completion of the programme, the student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Utilize business and management skills to perform HRM functions while considering diversity, culture, social responsibility, and globalization in various contexts.</li> <li>- Use HR skills to plan, implement, review, and develop HR practices to sustain organizational competitiveness.</li> <li>- Practice technical agility including the application of statistical tools, data management and data analytics throughout HR functions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Skills: Generic Problem Solving and Analytical Skills</b></p> <p>After successful completion of the programme, the student will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analyze various human resource management and business issues locally, regionally, and internationally namely, manpower planning, recruitment, performance, training, and compensation to contribute towards achievement of organizational goals.</li> </ul>

- Create innovative alternative to take decision in dynamic workplace situations.
- Assess contemporary issues of business and human resource management to identify the opportunities for improvement within Bahraini Labor Law.

**Skills: Communication, ICT, and Numeracy**

After successful completion of the programme, the student will be able to:

- Communicate business and HR practices orally, visually and in writing effectively with target audience in various context.
- Demonstrate proficiency in using information technology at workplace.
- Exhibit numerical skills for interpreting quantitative data to achieve HR goals.

**Competence: Autonomy, Responsibility and Context**

After successful completion of the programme, the student will be able to:

- Demonstrate life-long learning, independent learning skills in pursuing career and higher studies to adapt diverse environment and culture.
- Take responsibility to act ethically with a demonstrated commitment to equality of opportunity and diversity in learning and talent development.
- Participate as an effective team member by displaying team building and leadership skills to achieve effectiveness of HRM in a diverse context.
- Manage time effectively.

\* Mandatory fields

### III. Judgment Summary

## The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>The Learning Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Efficiency of the Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	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
<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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

- The Bachelor of Human Resources Management (BHRM) programme has been offered by the Gulf University (GU) since 2002 and was licensed by the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 2008. It is delivered through the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences and was developed in line with GU's Programme Review and Development Policy and its Programme Design, Development and Approval Policy and Procedures. The programme is in line with the University's Mission and graduate attributes and has undergone a comprehensive review in 2018. This review included market research to ensure that the programme aligned with local labour market needs and further surveys were carried out amongst key stakeholders. Input was also sought from the Programme Industrial Advisory Board (PIAB) in order to ensure that the programme was fit for purpose. The programme is aligned with the requirements of HEC, BQA, and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), UK as well as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). In terms of occupational standards, GU benchmarked the programme curriculum content to AACSB and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), UK. According to the Administrative Sciences Department's Improvement Plan 2019-20 the programme aims to seek CIPD accreditation by September 2021. The Panel appreciates GU's initial steps to attain CIPD accreditation and encourages the University to pursue this.
- GU has Business Continuity Policy and Procedures in place and carries out risk assessment exercises at the institutional and programme level. A programme risk assessment form has been developed and programme leaders are expected to conduct the risk assessment in the identified areas affecting the academic programme. Discussion and

mitigation of risk are included in department meetings and actions are taken; the inclusion of part-time faculty is identified as one approach adopted to mitigate the risk of staff shortages. The Panel was informed that GU responded to the move to online teaching during the pandemic by providing training to staff on the use of MS Teams, and the Staff Development Unit supported staff in preparing assessments in the virtual learning environment. A GU-wide Operational Plan was developed to identify and address the challenges of moving to a hybrid learning environment.

- The BHRM programme was placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) at Level 8 in September 2020 and minor changes were made to the programme in response to the Condition Fulfilment Report submitted by the NQF Validation Panel in 2019-2020. The programme is run in accordance with HEC regulations, with a study plan being delivered over eight semesters with 130 credit hours. The Panel notes that the qualification is delivered in English or Arabic based upon the placement test result and the learner's preference.
- The programme title is concise and indicative of the qualification type and content. The title is accurately documented on certificates, transcript, programme specification, programme manual, the programme brochure, Student Handbook and the GU website. The current title was the result of a modification made to the earlier programme title in 2014-2015 with HEC approval.
- The programme has seven clearly stated aims; these aims have been mapped to the GU graduate attributes (GAs). These aims were revisited during the programme review 2017-2018, which involved students, alumni, external stakeholders and the PIAB. The 2018 Benchmarking Report shows benchmarking of the BHRM programme aims against a number of international universities to ensure that the aims are appropriate and comparable.
- There is a clear mapping of the BHRM programme aims with the University Mission and there is a clear relationship between the programme aims and the College Mission. The programme aligns with the GU strategic goals as set out in the University's Strategic Plan 2017-2018 – 2021-2022. There is reference to research in the programme aims, which reflects GU's Strategic Direction 2: Research with Sound Impact.

### **Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes**

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

**Judgment: Addressed**

- GU has defined generic GAs and programme GAs (relating specifically to Human Resources Management (HRM) which are aligned to each other. There is also clear alignment between programme aims, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and programme GAs. The assessment of achievement of GAs is built in through the assessment of the PILOs and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs).
- There are 16 clearly stated PILOs which are set out in a number of documents including the Programme Specification, the Programme Manual and the GU website. There is a clear link between programme aims and the PILOs. The PILOs were reviewed during the major programme review in 2018 and some were revised to match the overall expectations of the students from the programme and reflect complexity with greater focus on HRM functions and practices.
- The PILOs are stated in measurable terms, covering areas of Knowledge, Skills and Competence. As noted under Indicator 1.1, the programme has been successfully placed on the NQF, confirming that the BHRM meets the NQF requirements. Benchmarking has been carried out against the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and the AACSB. The mapping with the AACSB is focused on curriculum mapping, rather than PILOs; although the AACSB skills areas are shown in the document. What is missing from the benchmarking report is an actual comparison of the BHRM with other similar programmes (rather than just listing other programme aims and their PILOs) or an analysis of findings from the benchmarking, in line with GU's own Benchmarking Policy (see Indicator 4.4).
- GU has undertaken market research to ensure that the programme aligns with labour market needs and has carried out surveys amongst key stakeholders, as noted under Indicator 1.1. The CILOs are aligned to NQF levels and are written in accordance with expectations for that level. Their appropriateness is reflected in the programme's successful placement on the NQF. The Panel was provided with a sample of course benchmarking; however, this benchmarking does not include analysis or comparison with the CILOs of the GU BHRM programme (see Indicator 4.4).
- The CILOs provide a clear framework for the course contents according to NQF level descriptors and indicate the depth and breadth of knowledge, skills, and competencies that shall be demonstrated and achieved by the students. GU provided evidence to show that the CILOs have been appropriately mapped to the PILOs. The CILOs are set out in the course specifications which also show how the assessment components are also linked to the CILOs. The Panel is satisfied that there was a clear understanding of CILOs and how they contributed to the attainment of the PILOs amongst BHRM staff and students.

### **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 plan shows the progression of courses over the eight-semester programme and each course is linked to its NQF level. The programme follows the US credit-hour system, leading to a total of 130 credit hours. The study plan shows course by course progression and the pre-requisites, where required, are clearly indicated. The pre-requisites were revised during the major programme review in 2018 in order to ensure that students were fully prepared to progress from one year to the next. Academic progression is overseen by the academic advisors to ensure that students follow an appropriate study plan. There are no specific courses pertaining to HRM in the first year; students are expected to undertake university requirement courses and business requirement courses. Electives are offered in Year 3 and Year 4. There are two internships; the first is offered after Year 2 and the second is offered after Year 3. Student workload as set out in the study plan appears to be appropriate.
- During the major programme review in 2017-2018, an extensive market research project was carried out. Feedback was considered and the programme team implemented the suggestions in the revised programme. The PIAB was invited to participate in the review and meeting minutes from September 2018 show that the new programme changes were presented to the PIAB. Employers and graduates were surveyed during the programme review and the Panel was informed that their recommendations were noted. Benchmarking was also carried out during the review in line with GU's Benchmarking Policy. The revised programme was also sent to a number of external reviewers who provided initial feedback.
- The Administrative Sciences Department provides guidelines on curriculum structure and organization to ensure that the curriculum is balanced between theory and practice and knowledge and skills. The balance between theory and practice is further supported through the internship opportunities, guest lectures (although these have not been possible during the pandemic) and the graduation project. Zoho HR software is being used in a number of the BHRM courses which was confirmed during the virtual site visit.
- The course guidelines document includes a framework to ensure that GU programmes offer depth and breadth of learning. GU has carried out benchmarking to look at course content and the annual review of the programme further allows the programme team to revise content of some courses. The Panel notes that there is a wide range of courses offered at different levels over the four-year programme. The higher-level courses at NQF

levels 7 and 8 focus on areas of HRM specialisation to prepare students for the HRM profession and the Panel notes from the virtual site visit interviews that this is appreciated by key external stakeholders. The course specifications reflect the depth, breadth and variety of the programme offering.

- The Administrative Sciences Department submits requirements of textbooks and reference materials to the library, a resource mapping is carried out and an improvement plan is developed to address identified needs. The BHRM lesson plans make reference to primarily the core texts rather than wider reading; more could be done to highlight relevant research. However, the Panel was informed that there is a range of electronic databases available to students and three print journals are provided for each programme. During the pandemic, books were delivered to students' homes and links to eBooks were circulated to students. While there is a range of learning materials available for those studying on the BHRM in English, the Panel notes from the interview that there are limited resources for learners studying in Arabic (which make up the majority of the BHRM cohort). Students have access to the Arabic Al-Manhal database, but this does not provide access to the same BHRM learning and reference materials available in English. The Panel notes that extracts of key English texts are provided in Arabic but there is no clear policy on how this is managed or how consistency in the provision of English and Arabic resources is assured. The Panel recommends that the College should review the parity of the learning experience for students studying in English or Arabic in terms of course delivery, resources and assessment.

### **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**

- GU has a Teaching and Learning Policy and procedures. Each HoD is responsible for its communication and implementation. There is a mapping of teaching and learning methods to BHRM courses. The sample lesson plans provided suggest that there is a strong dependence on lecture and the use of PowerPoint. In the course reports, BHRM teaching staff have highlighted some limitations in the course delivery (for example, in terms of student interaction and engagement with research). It is clear that the move to delivery of courses *via* MS Teams during the pandemic has limited the range of teaching methods available but the Panel was informed that efforts have been made to make online classes more interactive, for example through the use of virtual breakout rooms.
- There is a teaching and learning strategy included in the programme specification and teaching and learning methods are linked to individual PILOs. While the approach to

teaching and learning is set out in a number of documents, lesson plans indicate that there is an emphasis on PowerPoint lectures. It is not clear how the approaches are informed by current research findings and how the implementation of the teaching and learning methods are monitored. GU states that in the move to distance education instructors have implemented a wide range of innovative teaching and learning practices. Expectations of how classes are to be conducted in the hybrid learning environment are set out in the Operational Plan for 2020-2021, which includes guidelines for scheduling and how to promote opportunities for student engagement. The Panel notes how academic staff have made efforts to increase student involvement in online classes to support the attainment of CILOs. There are potential issues with students on the Arabic track not being able to access staff research published in English. The Panel recommends that the College should review the quality of staff research output and monitor how it feeds into teaching and the delivery of the programme.

- While the Teaching and Learning Policy does not specifically refer to e-learning, GU aims to provide an efficient learning management system through MOODLE. During the pandemic, the majority of courses were delivered through MS Teams and GU developed a Distance Learning Policy, approved in November 2020, to provide guidance on the delivery of distance education. There are also E-learning and Distance Education procedures which provide guidance for the planning, implementation and review of programmes delivered in this manner. BHRM staff have adopted a hybrid approach with some students attending classes face to face and some *via* the online platform.
- Student participation is encouraged through project work and case studies, problem-solving and this was confirmed in interviews with staff and students. The course reports indicate that it has been challenging to encourage student participation during online teaching. There are four PILOs related to competence in this area and students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning through managing deadlines and producing reflective reports. According to the programme specification, attainment of PILOs in this area are achieved through a number of means including self-directed study time using online and/or text-based open learning materials. According to the Teaching and Learning Policy, exposure to professional practice takes place through the use of guest lectures. Internships and graduation projects also provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice and promote student independence.
- There is support for student research at GU and there is evidence of students carrying out joint research in collaboration with faculty. Students are involved in GU's Research Open Day where students are encouraged to present their graduation projects. Students are also expected to undertake a course in Innovation and Entrepreneurship to encourage innovation. In their interview, students provided the Panel with examples of their research projects and how their research capabilities had been developed, and the Panel is satisfied that GU has adopted a sound approach for the BHRM students.

- While there is a clear structure for formal learning, students' informal and non-formal learning is encouraged through participation in extra-curricular activities. GU states in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) that it aims to create an integrated learning environment which is supported through a range of extracurricular activities organised by the Student Services Unit and the programme leader. The organisation of these activities is guided by the Extra-Curricular Activities Policy and Procedures. Prior to the pandemic, GU organised a variety of workshops, roundtable meetings and guest speaker lectures. A survey is due to be carried out by the Student Services Unit to monitor student perception on involvement in extracurricular activities and the Panel supports this. The Panel notes that the majority of BHRM students are employed and encourages GU to ensure that the offerings of extracurricular activities are available for all students.

### **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**

- GU has an institutional-level Assessment Policy and procedures and these are aligned with HEC regulations. The overall mapping of assessment methods is reviewed in the programme annual review process which is overseen by the College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (CTLAC). The programme assessment strategy is included in the Programme Specification. A variety of assessment methods are used to measure the achievement of CILOs and PILOs. Changes have been made to the design of assessments in the move to distance education during the pandemic, which include time-bound online tests; time-bound assignments and case analysis; project-based assessment with online presentation and viva, as reflected in the restructured assessment for the BHRM.
- Assessment-related documents are made available *via* SharePoint, the Quality Assurance Manual, the Student Handbook and the Programme Manual. The approach to programme assessment is also made available in the programme specification. The Panel was satisfied that students and staff were aware of policies and procedures and knew where they could be accessed.
- The assessment types are set out in the Assessment Policy and quizzes are used to provide formative feedback to students. There are clear coursework rubrics and there are clear procedures in place to support and assess the graduation project. Teaching staff are expected to provide timely and useful feedback in line with the Assessment Policy; however, the sample of marked students' works provided had very little feedback for the students. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that feedback on assessment is timely, useful and is in line with the Assessment Policy.

- GU has a Research Policy to underpin its approach to scholarly research. However, during the virtual interviews, it was noted that there were differing expectations of ethical collection of data applied to faculty and students. All researchers should follow a clear ethical process to ensure informed consent is obtained. Participants involved in research also need to be provided with written information about the study. The Panel recommends that GU should review the understanding of ethics among staff and students and implement a formalised process to support the collection of data for student projects.
- GU has put in place Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedures to underpin the fairness and rigour of grading student achievement. Oversight of internal moderation is the responsibility of the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. The University also has mechanisms in place for the external moderation of students' assessed work (see Standard 3).
- There are University-wide Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures to detect academic misconduct and ensure that appropriate actions are taken. The avoidance of plagiarism is taken seriously, and GU uses Turnitin to monitor potential academic misconduct. There are also policies in place to address cases of cheating during examinations. The Panel learned during the virtual interviews that the institution implemented a number of mechanisms to assure the academic integrity of online assessment during the pandemic, with a greater focus placed on written assignments and case studies. GU Student Complaint and Grievance procedure allows students to lodge an appeal or challenge the decisions by the Disciplinary Committee.

## 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

- GU has a clear student Admission Policy that incorporates detailed criteria for the programme in terms of academic achievement. While the information is echoed on the GU website, it is not as detailed as the policy document. The procedures for admission are set out and provide clear guidance regarding the specific admission criteria including preparatory courses for students who do not meet the minimum criteria; admission for transfer students and admission for students with special needs. In addition, the Panel was informed during the virtual site visit interviews that an interview is conducted with each prospective student to establish their background, and reasons for choosing GU and the BHRM programme in particular. Within the SER, and the policy and procedure documents for admission, there is evidence of a case-by-case approach to students with additional learning support needs identified in the application and interview. The Panel was provided with examples of outcomes from the interview related to the level of English. Candidates were advised to take the Arabic track if it was considered to be in their interest.
- Benchmarking was noted by the Panel to support revisions of the placement tests, demonstrating a broader engagement with differing stakeholders to revise admission approaches. The admission criteria demonstrate alignment with the HEC regulations. To ensure oversight of the admissions process, a University Admissions committee has been established for this purpose.
- Clear guidance is provided regarding the required threshold for entry. Placement tests are noted for admission, including: Mathematics for Business; Computer Skills; English Language; and Arabic language. Students who do not meet the admission scores for direct

enrollment are required to undertake preparatory programmes for the aforementioned subjects.

- The Admission Policy and application request forms clearly indicate credit transfer pathways. External transfers are considered if the course has a similar title, content, credit hours and NQF level. The required grades are noted to be in line with the HEC requirements. Transfer from courses outside of GU once registered require written permission from the College and President of the University. Internal transfers are considered after a student has completed a semester. Credit arrangements for transfer are clear and applicable to similar courses. Ultimately, the Head of Department (HoD) and Dean(s) provide approval for internal transfer. Recognition of prior learning is also clearly indicated in the Recognition Policy and procedures.
- Admission requirements and application deadlines are updated every year and published in the policy document and on the website. According to the virtual site visit interviews and the provided evidence, benchmarking activities with local, regional and international higher education institutions are undertaken and the performance of students is considered in the revision of admission requirements.

## **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***

- The Panel notes clear policies and procedures which comply with Higher Education and Ministry of Labour regulations in terms of recruitment for full and part time members of academic faculty. This is supported by the Human Resources (HR) strategy. The staff induction policy provides evidence of a systematic approach to new academic and administrative staff. The procedures for induction are clearly articulated and their implementation was confirmed in interviews. Additionally, a separate administrative staff induction document provided an example presentation for staff that highlights the expected information for induction. Further details to support ongoing induction activity were noted to include course portfolio, course reports and approaches to distance learning.
- GU Appraisal Policy provides clear expectations for faculty performance on an annual basis. The appraisal process is well documented and includes a self-assessment by faculty which is discussed with the HoD. An individual training needs analysis is also discussed with faculty during the appraisal process. The Panel was informed during the virtual

interviews that an appeal can be made by faculty if they do not agree with the final score provided for their performance by the HoD. The appraisal process clearly articulates the route to promotion which enables identification of development needs. The evidence provided to the Panel includes examples of two faculty promotions, as well as appraisal forms that were completed by the HoD.

- In the Research Policy, a clear set of principles are noted to align with national strategies and ensure that the research undertaken is aligned to the college and university research plans. The Panel notes the encouragement of interdisciplinary research at the institutional level. There is also a clear process to request funding for research along with a research proposal form. Staff are actively involved with research and produce a range of outputs from conference abstracts to peer reviewed papers. However, the Panel notes that the quality of journal outputs are not always internationally recognized through associations such as the Chartered Association of Business School. Hence, the Panel recommends that GU should reconsider how the Institution values and attests quality to research papers produced by faculty.
- The Panel notes that the faculty workload policy breaks down the allocation of time per faculty and includes all activities of academic staff. The policy clearly highlights the load per rank of faculty and that the allocation process is annually reviewed. The role descriptions are clear for faculty and administrative staff. The Panel notes that the policy document provides the HoD/Dean and academic staff with the opportunity to discuss amendments to allocation of workloads. The Panel was provided with examples of reduced workload due to administrative tasks. The Panel also notes that GU has an equality opportunity policy in place, which sets out protected personal attributes and accommodates women's needs
- The CVs provided to the Panel highlight seven faculty with varying experiences related specifically to HR experience in teaching and the profession as well as broader general experience in business. Appropriate qualifications are noted and diverse backgrounds in most cases. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that all faculty qualifications are diverse and internationally recognized during the recruitment process. Additionally, the CVs indicate that some faculty are members of the CIPD, but it is not clear what type of membership they have; as, there are significant differences between the types of membership. The difference between memberships should be made clear to support GU's aspiration to achieve CIPD accreditation.
- GU has a well-defined Staff Professional Development Policy in place. The Panel notes according to the appraisal forms that faculty are encouraged to reflect on their continuing professional development needs. This is supported by the professional development plan and courses. The Panel learned during the virtual interviews that GU invested in training to support online delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic. Training is also provided for

faculty to support Internships and Graduation projects. The provided evidence includes a filled sample of the Impact of Training Forms, which include the feedback of academic staff on the provided training courses by GU and suggestions for improvement.

- The Panel notes that there are clear policy and procedures in place to monitor and support retention of staff. Incentives are provided to recognize staff contribution and support staff retention and it is noted by the Panel that retention is 100% for the year 2020-2021 as indicated in the SER. However, the list of programme academic staff for the last three years shows that there have been staff changes indicating a reduced percentage. The Panel recommends that the College should develop a viable action plan for the work environment to ensure the retention of highly qualified staff members.

### **Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources**

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- The Panel notes from the SER and video tour that classrooms and laboratories are adequate for the BHRM student population. Additional study rooms are available for students to access individually or as part of group work. There are detailed maintenance policies in place to support appropriate physical facilities.
- From the Asset Management Policy and Software Policy, the Panel notes that there are clear processes to maintain and upgrade Information Technology (IT) facilities according to staff and student needs. The Panel notes that monitoring is undertaken to confirm laboratory usage and to collect feedback from students through the general satisfaction survey regarding IT services.
- Electronic resources are essential during the increased prevalence of online teaching and the Panel notes that GU has provision of e-book and e-journal access to students. Access to Arabic and English databases was noted during the virtual site visit interviews and the three HR print journals recommended by GU are available in English. Core texts particularly from the CIPD are only available in English as noted during the interviews. The recent student survey highlights that over 80% of students indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the resources were appropriate. Students also expressed their appreciation for librarians' services with over 90% in agreement that the librarians were available and helpful. Policies and procedures for the library are noted by the Panel to be clearly articulated. An increase in the library collection of hard copies of texts is noted. However, parity between core texts, noted during the video and from interviews,

highlights an ongoing issue with translation of core texts from English into Arabic particularly related to HR core courses. The Panel urges GU to ensure that students on the Arabic track have similar access to the BHRM core material as noted under Indicator 1.3.

- A maintenance procedure is clearly highlighted and actioned through a maintenance schedule. Further evidence of monitoring the maintenance of resources includes IT Audit Report and IT Improvement Plan based on Audit Report as well as facilities, including buildings etc.
- The Panel notes that there is a policy that outlines health and safety issues as well as a health and safety plan. This is supported by specific regulations for laboratories as well as evidence to support the use of good practice to comply with fire regulations and ensure that appropriate maintenance is conducted regularly.

### **Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems**

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- The Panel notes that GU Student Information System (SIS) supports decision making at academic and administrative level. Reports generated by the system provide information to support decisions such as cohort analysis of progress and this was affirmed during the virtual interviews with faculty and administrative staff and in the evidence provided.
- The Panel notes that the MOODLE system is used at GU to provide a range of reports for faculty whilst acting as the main source of teaching materials and a forum for discussions to facilitate collaborative learning. Additionally, it is noted by the Panel that tracking is done through LabStats software. A new system has been introduced: KOHA to support library processes. Additionally, it is noted that KOHA provides reports regarding download of materials etc. to support faculty analysis of the usage of the library and MOODLE.
- The SIS holds students' data and the Panel notes that clear policy and procedures are in place to support this. Data held to provide information of grades is supported through MOODLE and an approval process to confirm grades is in place. This is supported through college checklists for graduate student files and council meetings. The Panel noted during the virtual site visit that there is a clear back up regime with a policy and procedures to support protection of data.

- Certificates are noted by the Panel to have a clear policy and procedure for ensuring their accuracy and that the students have fulfilled the graduation requirements. In addition, different parties are involved in checking the Certificate's accuracy to ensure the authenticity of certificates and transcripts. The Panel was able to confirm that certificates are issued in a timely manner based on the virtual interviews with administrative staff and alumni.

## **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**

- GU has different specialized offices which include: Admission & Registration Unit, Student Services Unit, Teaching Excellence and Technology Center, Internship and Career Development Office, Student Counselling Office and Alumni Office to support the students. The feedback provided from the student survey, noted by the Panel previously, indicates that the students value the librarian's services. The induction indicates that a good level of support is available to faculty and students to support access to library services throughout the academic year. This is complemented by clear E-Learning support.
- The Panel notes that internships and career development are supported through a clear policy and procedure, and are delivered by the Internship and Career Development Office (ICDO) which maintains a database of companies. The Panel notes from virtual interviews that the feedback of faculty and students is sought after/collected, to maintain a list of companies that can provide appropriate internship experiences.
- The Student Handbook provides information on the rules and regulations for new and existing students. Induction provides initial guidance to students commencing their studies, which was confirmed during the virtual interviews with alumni and students. In addition, GU has a policy and procedures for inducting newly admitted students that targets all students.
- Academic advisors are well placed to monitor the progress of students to achieve the PILOs and GAs. The Panel notes that clear policy and procedures are provided to support the expectations of the advisor and student relationship. Office hours for staff are noted. During the virtual interviews, it was confirmed that students are provided with appropriate academic support from faculty members. Throughout the pandemic, support has been provided online, as noted during the virtual interviews with students and staff.

- GU's Equal Opportunity Policy supports providing equal employment and admission for all qualified candidates without discrimination. Students identified with additional support requirements were noted during the virtual interviews. Examples were provided of individual interventions such as weekly tutorials to support such students. Counseling procedures are noted by the Panel to be in place for students to gain support through specialized staff. Records are maintained of counselling services the students have benefited from/ have made use of.
- GU's SIS system is used to identify the students at-risk of academic failure. A monitoring process was discussed with the Panel during the virtual interviews with staff and students. Once the at-risk students are identified based on their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), they are referred to their academic advisors and an action plan is developed to support their individual learning needs. As per the SER, the percentage of at-risk students whose CGPA below 2.0 was high in 2018-2019 (20%) and decreased to 16% in 2019-2020. The Panel acknowledges the efforts exerted by faculty to support at-risk students and recommends that the College should further investigate the reasons for such high percentages.
- As noted under Indicator 2.3, student surveys are utilized to collect their feedback on the provided resources and support services including extracurricular activities. Such regular assessments of students' needs including extracurricular activities is essential to support a holistic approach to students. The Panel notes with appreciation the use of the 'You Said We did Bulletin' to communicate actions taken by GU based on 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**

- The Assessment Policy and Procedures clearly indicate the practices adopted to provide a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment methods to support implementation at the course level. The programme and course specifications provide evidence of associated procedures to support the effective implementation of the Assessment Policy. The Panel notes that all assessments are mapped with CILOs and appropriate to the level of the courses.
- Alignments of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and GAs are noted by the Panel to be verified internally and externally. Course specifications provide mapping of assessment methods to the CILOs and PILOs. Mapping of the course and programme ILOs is clearly noted with samples of the Capstone project rubric. The Panel notes that CTLAC is responsible for verifying the alignment of the assessments and their validity.
- Formal mechanisms are in place to ensure the achievement of ILOs at the course and programme levels. As per the SER, the Institutional Performance Measurement Office is responsible for aggregating the assessment results of the CILOs and provide reports about the level of students' achievement of PILOs for each course in the programme. Course reports include the results of the assessment of CILOs per student. In addition to the direct assessment of ILOs, surveys for employers' and alumni are used to provide indirect feedback about the level of graduates' achievements of ILOs.
- The Panel notes that there is an established College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (CTLAC) that receives and reviews the course reports. Areas for improvements are identified in course reports, which include the achievement results of the CILOs. Additionally, external moderation is sought and helps in monitoring the assessment process. Changes to assessments are noted through a restructuring assessment report which was confirmed in Panel interviews.

### **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**

- GU has comprehensive policies and procedures to detect academic misconduct and ensure that appropriate actions are taken. Interviews with staff and students indicated that these policies and procedures are well disseminated and there are clear guidelines to discourage plagiarism and misconduct in any scholarly work conducted. However, as noted under Indicator 1.5, there is a lack of consistency regarding ethical practices related to data collection. The Panel urges the College to develop a clear ethical process for the collection of primary data to ensure that informed consent is obtained as well as providing participants with written information about the study (see the recommendation under Indicator 1.5). The Panel also suggests that a peer review process can be introduced with clear ethical guidelines for approval of research within the programme, which applies to faculty and students collecting primary data.
- The Panel notes that there are clear processes in place to support monitoring misconduct in terms of plagiarism. Students are requested to confirm the originality of their work upon submission. Announcements and information regarding the expectation to adhere to academic integrity are supported through instructors *via* MOODLE. Noncompliance with the misconduct policy is managed by the degree of severity of the misconduct. It was noted during the site visit interviews that academic misconduct has been closely monitored in the COVID-19 period to reduce incidents.
- Infringements, whether minor, major or repeated offences, are noted to have particular penalties. The Panel notes that there is a clear process to communicate with students and resulting actions. The Disciplinary Committee handles and oversees misconduct cases. In the 2020-2021 Disciplinary Committee Report, there were several suspected cases of infringement with some cases detected during the midterm and final examinations in the BHRM programme.

### **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**

- GU has Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedures in place, which were clearly explained to the Panel during the virtual interviews. It is noted from the evidence that verification procedures have been undertaken to ensure the appropriateness of the assessment and its alignment with the CILOs. Pre and post internal verification and moderation are conducted by the assigned HRM faculty for mid-term and final examinations, with the objective of improving courses and the programme and ensuring the fairness of grading. Internal verification and moderation forms are used to indicate whether or not the assessment and grading/marking have met the requirements.
- The verification and moderation processes are implemented and monitored by the CTLAC and the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (UTLAC). These committees prepare annual reports on the verification and moderation processes identifying areas for improvement.
- The external verification and moderation processes are supported by documented criteria to select external verifiers/moderators with subject expertise for the courses. The Panel noted during the site visit interviews that the selected verifiers/moderators are local/regional faculty. The Panel encourages GU to include international faculty.
- The role of the external verifiers/moderators is clearly stipulated. The selection of externals is transparent and an example of an external moderator invitation was provided to the Panel. It is noted that instructors are open to external feedback and the moderation is undertaken in a comprehensive manner. During the virtual interviews, examples were noted of external verifier/moderator feedback to support changes to improve the quality and consistency of assessments.
- As noted earlier under this Indicator, the CTLAC and UTLAC monitor the verification and moderation processes for the BHRM programme. The provided evidence indicates that feedback is collated from instructors, HoD, CTLAC and UTLAC and the areas for improvements are identified in the different forms and reports.

### **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**

- GU has a Students Internship and Career Development Policy and Internship Procedures. As noted under Indicator 1.3, the BHRM programme includes two internship courses; the first is offered after Year 2 and the second is offered after Year 3. The internship is a mandatory element of the programme, providing work-based learning practice to support

the knowledge, skills and competence gained from the programme. The Panel notes that the course specification for the internship is clear. Annual reports provide confirmation of the companies that have been part of the work-based learning process for 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

- Students are provided with clear guidelines through the Internship Orientation to support the placement process which is overseen by the ICDO. The academic supervisors and field supervisors have clear roles in the internship process, which are clearly defined in the related policy and procedures. The field supervisors monitor the progress achieved by the students during the internship based on the tasks specified in the Internship Plan. The academic supervisors visit the students at the workplace and follow up on the implementation of the Internship Plan. However, it was noted during the virtual site visit interviews that not all stakeholders were aware of the expectations of the internships. The Panel recommends GU to ensure that the goals and aims of internships are clearly communicated to all stakeholders, mainly the field supervisors and provide them with appropriate information and training about their role and responsibilities, to ensure that they are able to effectively evaluate students' work-based learning and achievement of related outcomes.
- The Panel notes that specific CILOs have been defined for both internship courses and are set at the appropriate NQF level. The internship assessment methods are aligned with the CILOs, which are mapped to the HRM PILOs. A sample of Internship Reports was provided to the Panel. These reports indicate the level of the achievement of CILOs by students and the results are aggregated to illustrate the level of the achievement of PILOs per course.
- The Panel notes that the assessment methods used in the two internship courses are clearly defined, deployed and well-managed. These methods include evaluations by the academic supervisor (30%), the field supervisor (40%) and a jury panel of three faculty members for the final presentation/viva voce (30%). Internship mapping scorecards and assessment rubrics ensure consistency and the appropriateness of assessment in terms of content and NQF level. All interns are required to prepare a final report upon completion of the internship, which are assessed by the academic supervisors.
- ICDO collects feedback from all stakeholders regarding the process of the internship, which is subsequently analysed and reported to the HoDs. At the end of the internship, feedback forms are completed by the student, the field supervisor and the academic supervisor. The Panel notes that the feedback results are discussed in the Department Council meeting for improvement.

### **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**

- There are Graduation Project Procedures that are well-disseminated and applicable to all GU programmes. These procedures clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of students and academic supervisors. The Panel notes that the ILOs of the Graduation Project Course are well defined and mapped to the HRM PILOs. Additionally, the Panel notes that training is provided to faculty regarding the requirements of the graduation project and students are provided with a graduation project orientation. Faculty are assigned by the HoD to supervise students who are eligible to take the graduation projects based on their expertise and the selected project topics and themes by students. Assigned supervisors conduct regular meetings with students to discuss their progress, review draft reports and provide feedback.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that supervisory meetings are conducted regularly with students and feedback from students are also collected to assess their satisfaction with the supervision provided and the survey results are discussed in the Department Council's meetings. The Panel notes from the interviews that there is a high level of input from faculty to support students through supervisory meetings and feedback.
- The Panel notes from the SER that there are different assessment methods in place to evaluate the capstone project including the 10% for the graduation seminar, 10% pre-jury, 20% project progression and 60% for the final jury. All the assessment parts are mapped to learning outcomes and benchmarked to similar programmes. The Panel was provided with the Mapping Scorecard of the Graduation Project, which illustrates the alignment of the assessment to the CILOs and its contribution to the achievement of the HRM PILOs. The Panel was also provided with a sample of Internal Panel Assessment and a sample of Graduation Project Pre-Jury Assessment and Feedback. The Panel notes that supervisors monitor the performance and progression of the students on a regular basis. Additional feedback from an external jury during the viva is also noted and this was confirmed in the virtual interviews.
- The Panel notes that there are mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of the graduation project procedures. As per the provided evidence and the virtual interviews, feedback is collected from students, academic supervisors and external juries.

The collated feedback is discussed in the department council meetings and actions are decided upon if improvements are needed.

### **Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates**

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- The samples of student assessed work and graduation projects that were provided to the Panel as part of the evidence are adequate and of an appropriate standard. The BHRM students' creative and innovative skills based on the sample of the graduation projects and assessed work were noted by the Panel as well as the mechanisms which are in place at GU to ensure that the assessed students' work is comparable with the work provided by students in other universities and reflect their ability to create and innovate. These mechanisms include the invitation of external moderators and jury members to assess students' work and course projects.
- As per the provided statistics in the SER for the last five academic years, there is an increase in the number of admitted students in the first year of the BHRM programme from 31 in 2015-2016 to 65 in 2019-2020 and an increase in the number of graduates from 13 in 2015-2016 to 41 in 2019-2020. While the ratio of successful graduates to admitted students has increased from 20% to 41% in the last five academic years, it is still less than 50%. The number of discontinued students compared to the number of admitted students was also high in 2019-2020. The Panel advises the College to further investigate this issue.
- In line with the Alumni Policy and procedures, the Alumni Office is responsible for tracking and monitoring graduate destinations. Minutes of departmental meetings show that student progression and graduation data is considered and monitored regularly to ensure academic standards are met. Data is collected from the alumni by using the graduation destination surveys. These surveys indicate that out of 59 graduates in the last two academic years, 64.4% are employed, and while 86.84% of the employed graduates work in government sectors, 13.16% work in the private sector. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has impacted graduate employment globally and the cohort for 2019-2020 is noted to have fewer employment opportunities than its predecessors. GU may wish to consider further support from their careers service to help secure employment through GU's network of employees.
- The Panel notes from the SER and evidence that GU has mechanisms in place to regularly collect feedback from alumni and employers, to measure their satisfaction rate with students' performance. From the sample of employer feedback, it is clearly indicated that

employers are content with the graduate's ability within the workplace. This was affirmed during the Panel interviews.

## Standard 4

### Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

#### Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- GU has clear policies and procedures that meet the needs of the BHRM programme and guide day-to-day processes in order to function effectively. The institutional policies include the Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedures, Programme Design and Development Policy and Procedures, Programme Review and Development Policy and Procedures, Assessment Policy and Procedures, and Conduct of Examination Procedures. Recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic, GU has developed Distance Education Policy and E-learning and Distance Education Procedures. From the virtual interviews and evidence, the Panel confirmed that policies and procedures are available on the SharePoint and GU's website, and communicated promptly to all stakeholders. However, the Panel notes from the evidence that some of the submitted policies are not updated as per the defined cycle; hence, the Panel recommends that GU should regularly review and revise policies in line with the University's four-year review cycle, or to be reviewed earlier if needed.
- GU has an appropriate quality assurance management system in place which is clearly described in the Quality Assurance Manual. It is supported by a set of policies, procedures and regulations that administer and manage the quality assurance processes in the university units. The Quality Assurance and Development Center (QADC) is responsible for overseeing the consistent implementation and monitoring of the quality management system through conducting internal audit cycles and ad-hoc audits according to the Quality Audit Procedures. Moreover, the University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC) is responsible for supporting the achievement of the University strategic goal towards ensuring quality and continuous development in cooperation with both the QADC and College Quality Assurance Committees (CQAC).
- GU has mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of its policies and procedures across the College and its departments. The implementation is overseen by the

Department and College Councils along with the UQAC and the QADC. Based on the annual and ad-hoc audit results conducted by the QADC, the audited departments and units prepare improvement and action plans.

- The virtual interviews affirmed that academics and support staff understand GU quality assurance policies, processes and practices. The Panel notes that they are provided with sufficient induction and training which helps in promoting their awareness and understanding of their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision. The induction and training sessions are delivered by the Staff Professional Development Unit or by invited local/ international experts.
- The Panel notes that the quality assurance management system at GU has been internally evaluated by the QADC which reviews its performance on an annual basis. Externally, the effectiveness of this system has been evaluated by local regulatory agencies (BQA, HEC) through regular institutional and programme reviews. Furthermore, GU invites external experts to review its quality assurance management system. From the virtual interviews and evidence, the Panel notes that these internal and external reviews have led to changes and improvements in practices.

#### **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 Panel notes that GU has a clear organisational structure which is published on its website. The College organizational chart is also clear and appropriate for the management of the programme, which is delivered by the Administrative Sciences Department within the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences.
- The Panel notes that GU's existing reporting lines are well-defined at the institutional and college levels. The HoD is the programme co-ordinator and reports to the Dean of the College who reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. There are also several committees and councils at the department and college levels that communicate effectively to make the necessary decisions.
- GU has clear job descriptions and Terms of Reference (ToR) for senior management positions, faculty and committees that are accessible to all GU staff *via* the SharePoint. The site visit interviews confirmed that faculty and administrative staff understand their roles and responsibilities. The provided evidence also confirmed that the members of the different committees meet on a regular basis to fulfil the assigned tasks and duties.

- As per the SER and GU's Monitoring and Review System Policy, the custodianship of the BHRM programme's academic standards rests on the departmental, college and institutional levels. It starts with faculty who are responsible for course delivery and ensuring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in line with the institutional policies and procedures, which are monitored by the committees and councils at the different levels.
- The programme co-ordinator/leader is the HoD who is responsible for the management of the Department and the delivery of its programmes. The roles and responsibilities of the HoD are well-defined in the job description for this position. During the virtual interviews, the Panel noted that the internal and external stakeholders are satisfied with the programme management leadership style in terms of its responsiveness to their feedback and its effectiveness in ensuring the quality of the BHRM programme.

### **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**

- GU Programme Review and Development Procedures include a clear description of the annual review process that is carried out by an internal programme team formed by the HoD. The collected feedback from internal and external stakeholders is analysed by the programme team and the annual review outcomes are collated in a comprehensive annual review report. The Panel notes that some of the identified areas for improvement by the internal programme team, which require minor modifications (i.e., assessment methods) to the programme, have been addressed.
- The Panel was provided with a sample of the programme improvement plans which are based on the annual reviews of the programme. The plans include actions that are allocated to specific individuals/committees, timelines and required resources. The Panel was informed during the virtual interviews that these plans are shared with all the programme staff and the HoD follows up with them to ensure that the plans are implemented. The QADC also follows up on the implementation of the programme improvement plans.
- The periodic review of the BHRM programme is conducted every five years by a dedicated programme review team as per the Programme Review and Development Policy and procedures. According to the SER, the main objective of the periodic reviews is to ensure the currency of the academic programme and its relevance to labour market and societal

needs in line with the Mission of the University. The outcomes of benchmarking with similar programmes and professional bodies as well as the feedback received from internal and external stakeholders are considered in the periodic reviews. The Panel notes evidence of justification of the need for changing the current BHRM programme stipulated in the reflection of internal and external stakeholders' feedback, benchmarking, market research, standards of accreditation and professional bodies, and published reports at national, regional, and international level.

- The Panel notes that GU has clear mechanisms in place that ensure a proper implementation of the periodic reviews and improvement plans. The proposed major modifications to the curriculum content and ILOs by the programme review team require the approval of the Department Council, the College Programme Review and Development Committee and the University Programme Review and Development Committee. The HoD and College Dean are responsible for monitoring the consistent implementation of the revised programme and improvement plans, which are also followed up by the QADC to ensure that the required actions are taken.

#### **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**

- GU has a Benchmarking Policy and procedures, which ensure that its programmes are benchmarked against other higher education institutions and professional bodies such as the CIPD and SHRM. The benchmarking is carried out by the programme review team, who is responsible for determining the nature and scope of the benchmarking exercise, the selection of the benchmarking partners, and the reporting of results. The SER refers mainly to informal web-based benchmarking that was carried out against similar undergraduate programmes offered by eight universities in the UK, one university in Australia, one university in the United States, two regional universities and two local universities. The SER and evidence provided illustrate a number of enhancements which have been implemented since the academic year 2018-2019 based on the benchmarking outcomes. However, as noted under Indicator 1.2, this benchmarking does not include analysis or comparison with the CILOs of the GU BHRM programme. Furthermore, while the Benchmarking Policy states that the process should entail an in-depth analysis of the identified gaps in the current programme, the latest BHRM Benchmarking Report that was provided to the Panel does not show such analysis. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should expand formal benchmarking activities and ensure that in-depth

analysis is carried out in line with the University's Benchmarking Policy and against similar programmes in Bahrain, the GCC region, and internationally.

- The Panel notes that GU employs several surveys to collect structured feedback from internal and external stakeholders. These surveys include the Course Evaluation Survey, Student General Satisfaction Survey, Alumni Survey, Employer Survey, and Faculty Satisfaction Survey. Furthermore, feedback is collected from students through the Student Council and Questions & Answers sessions, and from alumni and employers through the PIAB, focus groups with industry leaders, telephone calls and social gatherings.
- The Performance Measurement Office collates and analyses the feedback and comments from internal and external stakeholders obtained through surveys and forwards them to relevant departments and units for action. During the virtual interviews, the stakeholders confirmed that their feedback is collected on a regular basis *via* the surveys and verbally during the meetings. It was also confirmed that the collated comments are discussed at the Department Council meetings and improvement and action plans are developed in response.
- As noted under Indicator 4.3, improvement plans are monitored and followed up by the HoD, College Dean and the QADC to ensure that the required actions are implemented. As per the SER, improvements to the BHRM courses have been made based on the collated feedback from internal and external stakeholders (i.e., the revision of the graduation project and internship procedures, and the introduction of new courses in Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Sustainability). During the virtual interviews, the Panel confirmed that stakeholders are informed about changes made in the programme and that they are satisfied with actions taken by the programme team in response to 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**

- The Panel notes that GU has a clear functioning PIAB consisting of five members who are HRM discipline experts, employers and alumni. The formation, functions, responsibilities of the PIAB members are clearly stimulated in the PIAB ToR, which were recently revised and are common to all advisory boards at GU. The PIAB meets at least once every semester and its suggestions for improvement are discussed in the Department Council and included in the programme action plans. From the virtual interviews and evidence provided, concerning the PIAB's suggestions for improvement being reflected in the

revised BHRM programme, the Panel confirmed that members of the PIAB are satisfied with the changes made in the programme.

- The Panel notes that GU collaborates efficiently with the programme's external stakeholders (employers, alumni, PIAB, etc.) who provide important insights on the current challenges in the labour market, expected changes, new technologies, skill gaps and career opportunities for the BHRM graduates. Furthermore, the Panel was provided with a recent Market Research Report for the BHRM programme which identifies the labour market needs, to ensure that the programme is relevant and up to date. As per the SER and virtual interviews, GU benefits from the market research reports conducted by the World Bank and Gulf Talent, which provide useful secondary information in relation to the HRM field. Furthermore, GU has organized several formal roundtables and interviews with industry representatives, such as the Economic Development Board to discuss the skills and knowledge expected from the HRM graduates.
- Based on the evidence and the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel is satisfied that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that the programme meets labour market and societal needs, which include market studies and the feedback collated *via* surveys, focus groups, interviews, and roundtable meetings. In addition, CQAC and QADC monitor the implementation of the programme improvement plans. Recently, the QADC has conducted an *ad hoc* audit of the labour market scoping activities in March 2021 to ensure that the related procedures are effectively implemented.

## 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 in Human Resources Management of College of Administrative and Financial Sciences offered by the Gulf University.**

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

1. GU's initial steps to attain Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development accreditation.
2. The use of the 'You Said We did Bulletin' to communicate actions taken by GU based on student feedback.

**In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that Gulf University and/ or the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences should:**

1. Review the parity of the learning experience for students studying in English or Arabic in terms of course delivery, resources and assessment.
2. Review the quality of staff research output and monitor how it feeds into teaching and the delivery of the programme.
3. Ensure that feedback on assessment is timely, useful and is in line with the Assessment Policy.
4. Review the understanding of ethics among staff and students and implement a formalised process to support the collection of data for student projects.
5. Reconsider how the Institution values and attests quality to research papers produced by faculty.
6. Ensure that all faculty qualifications are diverse and internationally recognized during the recruitment process.
7. Develop a viable action plan for the work environment to ensure the retention of highly qualified staff members.
8. Further investigate the reasons for the high percentages of students at risk of academic failure.
9. Ensure that the goals and aims of internships are clearly communicated to all stakeholders, mainly the field supervisors and provide them with appropriate

information and training about their role and responsibilities, to ensure that they are able to effectively evaluate students' work-based learning and achievement of related outcomes.

10. Regularly review and revise policies in line with the University's four-year review cycle, or to be reviewed earlier if needed.
11. Expand formal benchmarking activities and ensure that in-depth analysis is carried out in line with the University's Benchmarking Policy and against similar programmes in Bahrain, the GCC region, and internationally.