National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor in Accounting and Finance

College of Administrative Sciences

Applied Science University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 26-28 May 2014

HC037-C2-R037

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Acronyms

AACRAO	College Registrars and Admissions Officers
ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
ACFE	Association of Certified Fraud Examiners
AICPA	American Institute of Certified Public Accountants
ASU	Applied Science University
BA	Bachelor in Accounting
BAF	Bachelor in Accounting and Finance
BBA	Bachelor in Business Administration
BMIS	Bachelor in Management Information Systems
BPS	Bachelor in Political Science
CAS	College of Administrative Sciences
CFA	Chartered Financial Analyst
CFP	Certified Financial Planning Certificate
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
IIA	Institute of Internal Auditors
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome

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IMA	Institute of Management Accountants
MAF	Master in Accounting and Finance
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MHR	Master in Human Resources
MIS	Management Information Systems
MCQs	Multiple-choice questions
PCRC	Programme and Curriculum Review Committee
PED	Programme Evaluation Documentation
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

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1.   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the QQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 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 3: **Academic Standards of the Graduates**

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

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

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

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The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is 'confidence' in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a 'limited confidence' judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be 'no confidence', as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Applied Science University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 26-28 May 2014 for the academic programmes offered by CAS, these are Bachelor in Accounting and Finance (BAF), Bachelor in Accounting (BA), Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor in Political Science (BPS), Bachelor in Management Information Systems (BMIS), Master in Accounting and Finance (MAF), Master in Business Administration (MBA), and Master in Human Resources (MHR) programs.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor in Accounting and Finance based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by CAS the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

Applied Science University (ASU) was notified by the DHR/QQA on 24 October 2013 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of the academic programmes offered by the College of Administrative Sciences. On 3 March 2014, ASU was informed that the exact date of the site visit will be on 26-28 May 2014. In

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preparation for the review, ASU conducted a self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 27 February 2014.

DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Business Administrations, Accounting, Finance, Political Sciences, Management Information Systems, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised 10 external reviewers.

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel based on:

(i)   analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
(ii)   analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
(iii)   analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that ASU will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its Bachelor in Accounting and Finance programme. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence it is the right of ASU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, ASU is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

DHR would like to extend its thanks to ASU for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the staff in ASU.

1.3   Overview of the College of Administrative Science

The College of Administrative Sciences is one of three colleges within ASU. The Programme Handbook 2013-2015 of the College states that the College was established in 2005 with the mission to meet the needs of Bahrain community and the region for specialised and qualified cadres in administrative sciences, business administration, accounting, finance, MIS and political sciences.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: The Business Administration, the Accounting and Finance, the Management Information Systems, and the Political Science departments, and offers five undergraduate programmes (Bachelor in Business Administration, Bachelor in Accounting, Bachelor in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor in Management Information System, Bachelor in

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Political Science) and three postgraduate programmes (Master in Business Administration, Master in Human Resources Management, Master in Accounting) across the four departments.

The College employs 34 teaching staff members of which 30 are full-time faculty members. The SER indicate that the total number of students registered in the College during the academic year 2012-2013 was 1,137.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Accounting and Finance Programme

The Bachelor in Accounting and Finance programme was offered for the first time in 2006. In 2012-2013 there were 142 students enrolled in the BAF programme. Since 2010, there have been 30 graduates of the programme. There are 17 faculty members contributing to the programme, two Associate Professors, 13 Assistant Professors, and two lecturers. The programme has been reviewed by the American Association of College Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), which provided some guidelines for programmes offering a Bachelor's degree. The curriculum has gone through a number of reviews and resulted on a revised curriculum that was implemented in the academic year 2012-2013. The programme is taught using English language as the media for learning.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor in Accounting and Finance

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	**Confidence**

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2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

2.1 The College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) has clear mission and vision statements aligned with the university's mission and vision. These are accessible to all staff and students *via* a variety of media including the university website, the University Catalogue, and the Programme Handbook. The Bachelor in Accounting and Finance (BAF) programme has clearly identified aims, objectives and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) which are linked well to the College's missions and visions statements. The programme aims and objectives clearly meet the norms expected for the discipline. The Panel appreciates the alignment of programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes to the college and the university's mission and vision statements.

2.2 The BAF programme comprises 135 credit hours assigned to 45 courses distributed as follows: 27 hours (9 courses) university requirements, 27 hours (9 courses) college compulsory requirements, 78 hours (26 course) core compulsory courses and 3 hours (1 course) core elective course. The Panel notes that the programme team conducted a revision for the curriculum, which resulted in significant improvements that were implemented from the academic year 2013-2014. These improvements address problems associated with the programme structure, the PILOs, the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and course contents. The Panel met with the senior management team who provided a clear explanation of the improvements that were incorporated in the BAF programme and its relevance to the local and regional needs. Moreover, interviewed students informed the Panel that these improvements have enriched the curriculum with useful topics, such as ethics in accounting, financial analysis, international auditing, and principles on macroeconomics and microeconomics. In general, the BAF curriculum is well designed and provides suitable workloads and year-on-year progression. There is a set of prerequisites that ensures a smooth progression from one level to another and the semester workload is acceptable (ranging from 15 to 18 credit hours) and corresponds with international norms. Knowledge and skills being developed through the programme structure and within each course are appropriately balanced and there is a balance between theory and practice. Interviews conducted during the site visit confirmed that the programme team and students are satisfied with the curriculum and the allocated workload. The Panel appreciates that the BAF curriculum is well designed to ensure suitable workload, year-on-year progression and a balance between theory and practice.

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2.3   The course syllabi is generally well developed and presented to meet the norms and standards of the accounting and finance disciplinary. The BAF curriculum plan includes courses such as 'Islamic Accounting' that suit and serve the local and regional environments. The Panel notes the use of a standard template for course syllabi. The course specifications template that is used currently by the BAF programme is informative for linking course materials to the CILOs and contains the basic information needed such as the CILOs, teaching methods, assessment methods, the timetable, and the resources to be used. However, it is missing information on the instructor teaching a course (e.g. the instructor's name, office location, contact information, office hours). The Panel suggests to include these information in the course specification. The Panel studied the provided course syllabi and notes with appreciation that the course syllabi is relevant to the degree of BAF and its expected outcomes and is contextualized to meet local and regional needs.

2.4   The Panel notes the BAF programme administration's efforts in reviewing, assessing, and developing the curriculum plan including the programme ILOs based on benchmarking with other universities and the consultation of external reviewers for the BAF programme. The PILOs are expressed in the programme specifications and there is evidence of aligning the PILOs with programme aims and objectives. There are 12 PILOs divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding (A1-A4); subject – specific skills (B1-B3); critical thinking skills (C1-C3); and general and transferrable skills (D1-D2). The Panel studied the PILOs and notes that in general, these are aligned with the college's mission and the programme aims and are appropriate to the degree type and level. However, the Panel found a few instances where the PILO's are not well stated. These include the use of unsuitable verbs, convoluted sentences and unclear terms (See A2, A3, and C1). The Panel recommends that the programme team further revise the PILOs to ensure all of these are stated properly.

2.5   Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are stated for each course and documented in the course specification. These are mapped to the programme ILOs using a mapping matrix. During interviews with staff, the Panel found that they are knowledgeable about both the procedures for developing the CILOs and the rationale for the approach. The Panel acknowledges the care taken by the academic staff to ensure that the CILOs are appropriate for the programme through the mapping with the PILOs. The Panel scrutinized the CILOs in the course files and the mapping matrix provided and notes that in general the CILOs are appropriate to the course syllabi and are mapped appropriately to the PILOs. However, the Panel found a few cases where the CILOs need to be restated for clarity. Examples include the CILOs of the 'International Auditing' course and the 'Cost Accounting' course, which need to be revised. The Panel recommends that the Department further revise the CILOs to ensure that all of these are stated properly.

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2.6   The BAF programme includes a three credits internship course (ACF491) which is required for all students. Students who completed 90 credits are eligible to register in the internship course. There is a training coordinator for the entire College, who manages and facilitates the internship course for all students. The inclusion of such a training course is in line with international good practice. The Panel notes with appreciation the revised internship rules and procedures that are comprehensive and are implemented consistently to ensure a complete follow-up from both the industry and the academic supervisors. Out of the total marks, 50% is assessed by the industry supervisor and 50% by the academic adviser using a pre-developed rubric. There is evidence of an effective follow-up mechanism to assure that the internship experience enables students to achieve the learning outcomes and address any further challenges for the students during the internship periods. During interviews with the internship coordinator, the Panel learned that the coordinator ensures that a site visit is conducted for all students in the training field. The Panel suggests that the College increases the number of the site visits, and hence the number of faculty members involved, to meet with the industry supervisor and the student for in depth discussion of any problem arise or areas for improvements.

2.7   There is a clearly stated policy for teaching and learning that encourages the utilisation of a wide variety of teaching and learning methods to facilitate the achievement of the stated CILOs. The Panel notes from the interviews that faculty members are well informed of the policy. From the submitted course files and interviews conducted during the site visit, the Panel notes that most courses in the BAF programme show some level of students' participation in the learning process. The use of in-class exercises and case studies whenever appropriate is evident in some of the course files. Moreover, there is evidence that all accounting courses encourage the group-work method through group discussions, or projects. During interviews, students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the teaching methods currently being used in the BAF programme. The Panel appreciates this variance in the teaching and learning methods to support the achievement of the programme aims and learning outcomes.

2.8   ASU has implemented a Moodle platform to support the learning process. The Moodle system is used for uploading courses materials, chatting and making announcements. There are periodic reports about the usage of the Moodle, which shows significant increase in the adoption of Moodle by faculty members. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that it is not fully utilised as a learning management system. The Panel recommends that the Department conduct training for all its faculty members to enhance the usage of Moodle as a learning management system that will encourage independent learning amongst students.

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2.9   The BAF programme has a written policy for assessment, which provides clear guidelines for grade distribution, setting examinations and grading mechanism. The Panel also notes the documented policy for plagiarism and copyrights protections. An appeal procedure is in place to ensure fairness of students grading. There is evidence from the submitted examination papers and assessments in the course files that students are provided with feedback on their work that will help them improve their performance; in particular the feedback on the midterm examination papers. From meetings with the faculty members, it is evident that they are well aware of the assessment policy and current assessment methods and the role that these policies play in assessing the students' achievement. During interviews with students, the Panel found that they are aware of the current assessment methods used in the programme and their implications. There is also an Examination Committee on the department level that revises assessments and grades distribution before publishing them. Moreover, the Examination Committee studies the feedback from the external examiners and submits its recommendations for improvements to the Department Council. The Panel appreciates the clearly stated and communicated assessment policy and the arrangements for providing effective feedback to students. The university assessment policy stipulates a grade distribution that is uniform for all courses; 30% for midterm examination, 50% for final examination and 20% for other methods of assessment. As all courses are not always of the same nature, the Panel recommends that the University revise the current grade distribution policy and develop a more flexible policy based on the course level and nature. This will maintain the academic freedom needed to decide what is the best weighting of assessment to a given course content and objectives.

2.10   In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The programme aims, objectives and learning outcomes are aligned to the college and the university mission and vision statements and meet the norms expected for the discipline.
- The BAF curriculum is designed well to ensure suitable workloads, a balance between theory and practice, and provides a structured year-on-year academic progression.
- The course syllabi is relevant to the degree and its intended learning outcomes and is contextualised to meet local and regional needs.
- There is clear rules and procedures for the internship programme to ensure appropriate delivery and achievement of learning outcomes.
- A variety of teaching and learning methods is utilised to support the achievement of programme aims and learning outcomes.
- There is clear assessment policy and procedures, including providing feedback to students, that both faculty members and students are informed well of these.

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2.11   In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- further revise the programme and course intended learning outcomes to ensure that all learning outcomes are properly stated
- conduct training for faculty members to enhance the usage of the available e-learning platform as a learning management system that will encourage independent learning amongst students
- revise the current grade distribution policy and develop more flexible policy that takes into consideration the course level and nature.

2.12   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme.**

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3.   Indicator 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.

3.1   The University has clear admission policy and procedure that are published on the university website, in the University Catalogue, and in the Programme Handbook. A detailed admission procedure is contained in an Admission and Registration policy document. The admission policy stipulates a score of at least 60% in high school. Students with less than 60% can be eligible if they have at least one year of experience in the same field and pass a personal interview. The University has also defined that only 5% of the students are allowed to be admitted in the programme based on the exception rule. Moreover, ASU has a clear policy for accepting transferred students from other institutes. The Panel appreciates the transparency of the admission policy for newly admitted and transferred students.

3.2   The Panel studied the profiles of the admitted students and notes that these in general meet the set criteria. All students are required to take an English language test before commencing their studies. Depending on their performance in the placement test, students are requested to attend different English language courses offered by ASU. Students who achieve (0 – 40) in the placement test are required to attend an orientation programme and then advance to the other English courses in the programme, students who achieve (41 – 79) must register on two courses 'English 1' and 'English 2', and students who achieve (80 – 100) are required to register on 'English 2' only. However, the Panel notes that there is some inconsistency in the students concerning their English language skills. This was also observed during the meeting with alumni. The Panel recommends that the Department revise the effectiveness of its English language placement test and the exit level of the English courses especially that the BAF programme is meant to be taught in its entirely in English. Moreover, as mathematics and statistics are particularly important for accounting and finance students, it is recommended that students, especially those who are coming from art track of high school, set for a placement test in mathematics to assess their competency level.

3.3   The programme management lies between the Head of Department (HoD) and the Programme Coordinator. There are clear roles defined for the Programme Coordinator who is responsible for managing the programme. Moreover, the HoD has also defined roles and responsibilities in running the programme. Furthermore, individual courses are managed by assigned Course Coordinators who coordinate the teaching and learning activities. There is also a functioning academic committee structure comprising University, College and Department Councils, Academic Affairs and Curriculum Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Research

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and Ethics Committee, University Strategic Planning Committee, and the Quality Centre, among others, at the University-wide level. The SER further list a number of parallel committees at the College and Departmental/ Programme levels, such as the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee and Examinations Committee. The Panel found sufficient evidence of the functioning of the academic committee meetings. The Panel notes with appreciation the active engagement of students within the programme management. A representative from each programme attends the Department Council meetings and is encouraged to participate in the discussions relevant to students' affairs and require students' views. The Panel appreciates that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the structures and processes surrounding the programme management.

3.4 There are 17 faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme, two Associate Professors, 13 Assistant Professors, and two lecturers. The Panel studied the faculty CVs provided and notes that 10 of the faculty members are specialized in Accounting and Finance disciplines while the rest are from different disciplines. The Panel is satisfied that the number of accounting and finance staff directly serving the programme is sufficient to the number of students registered and that the faculty members are qualified to deliver the BAF programme. However, these faculty members contribute to the delivery of other undergraduate and graduate programmes, increasing the actual students–to-staff ratio and the teaching load of the staff members. In this situation, it becomes difficult to be current in the field, develop new teaching methods, and contribute to the community. Moreover, the Panel notes that some faculty members, especially newly recruited, are teaching six or seven sections in different subjects, this leads to difficulties in preparing and publishing research papers. The Panel recommends that the College revisit the working load of the faculty members, especially those in their first year at ASU, to provide them with the needed time to develop their teaching materials and methods and progress with their research activities in line with ASU's strategy.

3.5 The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by the faculty members to maintain a stream of research publications in peer-reviewed journals and the incentives ASU offers staff members who publish their research papers. During interviews with senior faculty members, the Panel learned of a useful mechanism for encouraging junior staff to participate in research and publication. The junior academics are mentored in writing research publications by senior academics in the early stages of their careers as evident from the collaborative research. The Panel appreciates the professionalism of the academic staff and their commitment to the successful delivery of relevant research in a collaborative manner.

3.6 ASU has a central Human Resource Department that is responsible for the development and implementation of policies relating to recruitment, appraisal and

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promotion of faculty members. The recruitment process involves the Department, the College and a centralized recruitment committee at the university level. The process starts from the vice-president for academic affairs who communicates with all departments for their future requirements. The requirements are then published on local and international newspaper, and electronically. After receiving the applications the Department Council studies all applicants, conduct interviews, and prepare a report for the College Council for approval, before forwarding it to the centralized committee for final approval. There is an annual appraisal process for all faculty members including the HoD. The appraisal sheet covers most of the faculty activities during the academic year including research activities, teaching load, development of the learning process, contribution to students supports activities, community services, and professional consultation. Interviews with the academic staff revealed that a Staff Promotion Policy has been developed recently, and hence there has not been any academic staff promotions in the recent years. The Panel recommends that the University implement the newly-developed Staff Promotion Policy to ensure the retention of the highly qualified staff.

3.7   There is a functioning induction process for the newly appointed staff. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel learned that the induction programme for newcomers involves introduction about the university services, such as Moodle, the library, and the IT services. It also covers presentations about HR and finance, academic, and registration and admission policies and procedures. The top management participates in the induction to emphasize the university's vision, mission, objectives, and organization chart. Before commencing teaching classes, both full-time and part-time staff members learn about the assessment policy and other academic policies. Current staff expressed satisfaction with these arrangements to the Panel. The Panel appreciates the appropriate arrangements in place to prepare newly recruited staff for assuming their responsibilities within the College.

3.8   ASU has a functioning Management Information System (MIS) and a Student Information System (SIS) which together provide means for maintaining students records with respect to admissions and registrations, admission profile, faculty time-tabling, examination marks entry and processing of results. The SIS enables academic staff to enter examination marks directly into the system and is used to generate a host of reports for management decision-making. Students confirmed that they have restricted access to the system *via* a secured login protocol and are able to access their examination results and academic records online. The Panel observed a physical demonstration of the SIS during the campus tour and notes that there are sufficient security features to ensure the integrity of the system. Interviews with some support staff and academics confirmed that the reports they receive from the system are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective identification and monitoring of 'at-risk' students. Evidence is provided on how the SIS is used effectively as a

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communication tool between at-risk students and their academic advisors. The Panel is satisfied with the use of the MIS and SIS to support teaching and learning and to aid decision-making.

3.9   ASU has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of the learners' information. This includes having backup copies of records on-site and off-site and data administration arrangements related to authorizations for the different levels of users. There is also a policy in place to ensure security of records through a defined authorization mechanism, storage of data, privacy of information, exchange of information, the usage of anti-virus and security tools, and security agreements with users. The Panel appreciates that these arrangements are in place to protect students records. All marks entered into the system are printed out and reviewed independently by an assigned faculty member before submission to the HoD for approval, and thereafter to the Dean for endorsement. An additional validation is done by the Registration Department through a 'second marks entry'. The marks and results are then confirmed on the system and can be accessed by students. Interviews with academic and administrative staff confirmed the approval and validation procedures. The Panel also learned from the interviews and supporting documents, that ASU has a Disaster Recovery Plan in terms of which data from the SIS is backed up periodically to a remote site to forestall any potential loss of data through disasters such as fire. The Panel appreciates the rigour of the implemented procedures to ensure the security of learners' information and accuracy of results.

3.10   The Panel toured the university campus and visited the teaching halls, laboratories, staff offices, the bookstore, praying spaces, the health clinic, the main food court, the student activity hall, the study spaces and other facilities. There are seven computer laboratories with 154 computers, and 46 teaching halls all equipped with data shows. The Panel appreciates the suitability of the physical and material resources available. The Panel toured the library and noted with appreciation the well-structured library with private study space available for students, conveniently placed LCDs to aid in allocating books, as well as online journals, periodicals and databases in both English and Arabic languages. The library supplies the programme with 789 titles for accounting and finance, and 64 periodicals in accounting. The Panel encourages the Department to continue increasing the library's holdings as related to the accounting and finance specializations. During the touring session, the Panel met with qualified staff in the library, who explained the services that are provided to help and advice BAF students on using the library resources. The library is open daily from 8:00am to 8:00pm except Friday from 2:00pm to 8:00pm. In addition, the Panel visited some computer laboratories and noted that technical staff are available to monitor the laboratories during class time. This helps the lecturer to maintain the quality of teaching without concerns about technical problems that can emerge during study hours. The Panel notes that within the laboratories allocation there are free hours that

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are posted on the door where students can have access to the facilities to perform research and solve their homework. During the site visit, the Panel confirmed that the University provides internet services, Wi-Fi, email services, troubleshooting support, software installation, and access to the university services to all students and faculty members. The Panel appreciates that ASU has good facilities to support the students' learning experiences.

3.11 The Panel notes that ASU is using the attendance sheets to track the utilisation of resources in the laboratories. The ICT unit produces reports on the usage of computers, which is used by the Department for resource planning. The library information system provides tracking of the usage of the library e-resources, and produces reports to the Department and the College to revise the usage of resources. In addition, the e-learning system (Moodle) offers reports on its usage. The Panel notes the availability of the different tracking mechanisms and recommends that the College establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track usage by students and staff and utilise its outcome to further support decision-making.

3.12 As stated earlier, there are arrangements in place to provide support for students in the laboratories and for the use of e-resources. This is represented by having the technical support unit for the University, staff in the library, the teacher in the laboratory and the teaching assistants in the College. In addition, ASU has a social care unit headed by a university staff member and academic advisors for advising on academic issues. During the touring session, the Panel was informed about the services delivered by the social care unit of the Student Support Centre in order to address non-academic students' challenges. The Panel viewed the files of some cases where students' problems were resolved through consultation with the social care unit. Interviewed students were pleased with the availability and quality of the support they receive. In particular, current students are appreciative of the proactive manner through which support is provided. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place and the support system provided by the academic advisors, the library, the student care unit, and the IT unit by qualified staff.

3.13 An orientation and induction programme is offered at the commencement of each semester under the auspices of the Deanship of Student Affairs, where opportunity is provided for all new students, including transferring students, to undertake a campus tour to familiarise themselves with the university facilities and to be introduced to the administrative and academic staff. The ASU Students Handbook, which contains all important information, policies and guidelines, is distributed to the students. The Panel is pleased to note the active involvement of the Student Council and senior students, as well as academic advisors, in the orientation process. Training on the use of the library resources is also conducted during the orientation programme. The Panel considers that the face-to-face orientation day is very helpful

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in preparing students for their studies, and is additionally pleased that efforts are made to provide material online for the benefit of those who are unable to physically attend the orientation sessions. Students confirmed the orientation process during the interview sessions, and added that course tutors, in their first contact sessions, demonstrate the use of the web portal to access the requisite course material. There is also arrangements in place for transferred students to prepare them for joining ASU and inform them about the complete transferring process and the number of transferred credits. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place for the students orientation programme.

3.14   At-risk students are defined as those with a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of less than 60%. According to ASU's student at risk policy, students should be monitored before their GPA reaches 60%. Therefore all those students with accumulative GPA of 62% and below are monitored closely by their advisors. These students are prevented from registering online and are compelled to seek academic advice. The academic advisor has access to individual student records on the SIS and a form has to be filled. An action plan is developed by the student under the supervision of the advisor in order to identify the challenges faced by the student and the ways to address these. The advisor monitors the student on frequent bases and records the progress made, and the results of the discussion. During interviews, students confirmed that these meetings have helped them in better organising their study plans. Students are made aware of staff office hours, which are posted on staff office doors. These mechanisms in place helped the Department in reducing the number of students at risk. The Panel appreciates the mechanism in place to support at-risk students.

3.15   Students participate in visits to organizations in the Kingdom of Bahrain in order to learn about the accounting and finance disciplines. The internship programme, which is a compulsory course, provides a valuable experience for students to be associated with the organization they train in. The Panel also notes the annual 'Jobs Fair' day conducted by the Deanship of Student Affairs where students are exposed to potential employers. Moreover, a number of activities are arranged for students and they utilize the recreation facilities on campus with allocated time for female and male students. The Panel acknowledges the current learning environment and encourages extending agreements with other professional organizations for providing more practical experiences for all BAF students. Other physical environment including the library space with proper seating arrangements, cafeteria, computer laboratories, Wi-Fi access, LEDs monitors all are supporting the students learning environment. The Panel acknowledges the learning environment provided to the students.

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3.16   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There are clearly stated and transparent admission policy and procedure for newly admitted and transferred students.
- There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the department structure and processes that encourages students' involvements.
- The academic staff members are professional and committed to the successful delivery of relevant research in a collaborative manner.
- An effective induction process is in place for newly appointed staff members.
- Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure the security of the learners' records and accuracy of results.
- ASU has good facilities to support the students' learning experience.
- Appropriate support is provided to the students by the library, IT unit and the Social Support Centre.
- There is a well-organized students' orientation programme that is conducted to inform and prepare new and transferred students.
- Effective mechanism is in place to identify and provide academic support for at-risk students.

3.17   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- review the effectiveness of the English language placement test and the exit level of the programme English courses
- ensure that students, especially those who are coming from art track of high school, set for a placement test in mathematics to assess their competency level
- revise the teaching load model used for faculty members, especially those in their first year at ASU
- expedite the implementation of the newly-developed staff promotion policy to ensure a high retention rate
- establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track resource usage by students and staff and utilise the outcomes to support decision-making.

3.18   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme.**

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4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

4.1 The BAF graduate attributes are clearly stated and mapped to the programme aims with emphasis on how the graduates from the programme contribute to the development of accounting systems to address local and regional needs, have independent learning skills and are able to progress to postgraduate studies. The BAF graduate attributes are also mapped to the programme ILO. The Panel found appropriate usage of assessment tools for assessing the achievement of the programme ILOs and hence, the stated graduates attributes as evident from the samples of the submitted assessments. The Panel finds these attributes appropriate for the BAF graduates and appreciates the alignment of these graduates to the programme aims and ILOs as well the proper assessments tools.

4.2 There is evidence of the programme being benchmarked at a local, regional and international level. Moreover, ASU has developed recently a formal benchmarking policy to formalize and streamline the benchmarking activities. The Department selected Arab Open University in Bahrain as a local university, Yarmook in Jordan as regional university, and Greenwich as international university. However, not all these benchmarking activities were done through formal partnerships. The Panel found that the purpose and the choice of what is benchmarked and what against are clear and justified as in the submitted documentation. The Panel notes the arrangement in place to conduct formal benchmarking exercises and appreciates that the benchmark outcomes are reflected in the revised curriculum plan as evident in the submitted documentation. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel recommends that the Department put in place an appropriate mechanism to formalize partnership agreement with all institutions that the programme want to benchmark against and expand the benchmarking activities to cover the main aspects of the programme such as assessment tools and progression and retention rate and students' achievement.

4.3 There are defined assessment policy and procedures that are documented and known to faculty members. There is evidence from course files and interviews conducted that these are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews. During interviews, the Panel learned how the Department and the College monitor the implementation of these policies and review the assessment tools regularly to ensure their effectiveness through cooperation between the Department Council, the Quality Assurance Unit and quality assurance coordinator in the College. Moreover, assessment tools are subject to internal and external scrutiny as will be explained in more details in the sections below. The Panel notes that the assessment tools used are stated in the course specifications. During interview

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session with students, the Panel learned that at the beginning of each course, faculty members discuss the assessment tools and grade distribution with the students to ensure that they are aware of what is expected from them. The Panel appreciates that the assessment policy and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews and that students are aware of these.

4.4   There is a mechanism to ensure that course assessments are tied to the course ILOs and hence, the programme ILOs. The course specifications indicate the assessment tools used and the ILOs these intend to assess. Moreover, the lecturer of each course uses an excel sheet template to measure the achievement rate of the ILOs based on the grades earned by the students. The rate of 70% and above is considered achieved based on the university assessment policy. The lecturer then documents the outcomes from this sheet and discuss these with the programme coordinator, and suggests alternative assessment tools or any improvements to the Department Council for approval. In addition to the Departmental QA Unit which is responsible for ensuring that assessment methods are appropriately aligned to the programme and course learning outcomes. The programme team benefits from the internal and external moderations of the mid-term and final examinations as another evaluation tool. The Panel acknowledges the mechanism in place to ensure the alignment of the assessment tools with the learning outcomes.

4.5   Internal moderation activities have been formalized recently through adopting a formal mechanism put in place for the internal moderation of the mid-term and final examinations. The mechanism was first adopted in 2013-2014 academic year. At the beginning of the academic year, the Department forms an examination committee with all roles and responsibilities documented. The lecturer submits the examination paper at least 48 hours before the examination to the committee. The committee appoints an internal examiner to ensure the relevance of the questions to the course and the appropriateness of the assessment tools to measure the achievement of the learning outcomes and the distribution of marks. The internal examiner submits a report to the programme coordinator, who collects all the comments and report any recommendation for change to the Department Council for approval. However, the Panel has concerns on how the programme team evaluates the effectiveness of the mechanism for the internal moderation itself. Practically, if changes are recommended, these need to go through departmental approval within less than 48 hours of the date of the examination. Moreover, examination papers will be exposed to a large number of people. The Panel suggests that as the Department further implements the policy, it should assess the effectiveness of this mechanism. The internal moderator also reviews a sample of the marked scripts (including all failures, scripts with marks above 80%, and some randomly selected scripts) to ensure consistency of grading by the course tutor. The Panel notes that the current internal moderation system does not cover assignments or other assessment tools.

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The Panel recommends that the Department expand the internal moderation system to cover all forms of assessment.

4.6 The College states that assessments are subjected to external moderation. However, the submitted documentation, although provides some details on the process, does not include clear explanation about the external moderation process. During interview sessions, the programme team explained the mechanism in place for external moderation which has been adopted starting from the second semester of 2013-2014 academic year and has been implemented on only a sample of a few courses running currently. However, the value added due to this process is evident in the comments provided by the external examiners that, in some cases, lead to improvement in the quality of the assessment tool. The Panel recommends that the Department expedite the implementation of this policy and expand it to all courses and assessments, which would enable the Department to assess the effectiveness of the external moderation process.

4.7 The Panel was provided with samples of student assessed work that were presented during the site visit. The Panel found that the level of assessments is, in general, appropriate to the type of the programme. The level of difficulty in the examinations contained in the course files is, in general, acceptable and aligned with typical levels expected in similar programmes. However, the Panel is concerned about the over reliance on the use of multiple-choice questions (MCQs) in some courses without having a mechanism to ensure the robustness of this assessment tool. The Panel recommends that the College develop a mechanism to define controls on the usage of MCQ and ensure that this is stated clearly in the university's assessment policy. Moreover, the Panel noted with concern that there is repetition of the same questions across consecutive semesters in some courses of the BAF programme. The Panel urges the Department to develop a mechanism to detect such thing and prevent it from happening.

4.8 Graduates achievements is measured through direct mapping of CILOs to PILOs, statistics on pass rates for courses and the grade distributions, and reports of internal and external moderation. The Panel reviewed the submitted documentations and inquired during interviews about this process. The College uses 70% or above, which is aligned with other local universities, as the level of achievements required to have a cohort safely achieved CILOs then mapping all courses to the PILOs. However, the Panel encourages the Department to conduct more depth analysis and interpretation of students' results to give additional evidence of meeting these criteria. A second approach is the indirect assessment through alumni and employers surveys to gather information on the level of students' achievement. Interviews with alumni and employees show an acceptable level of satisfaction about students' achievements. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements in place to assess the programme

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graduates' achievement. The Panel also acknowledges that the University is currently working with ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) to obtain ACCA exemptions for coursework at ASU which would support the claim that at least these courses are meeting international standards. The Panel encourages the programme team to reach out to other certificating bodies such as the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants), IMA (Institute of Management Accountants), ACFE (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners), IIA (Institute of Internal Auditors, Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) institute, and Certified Financial Planning Certificate (CFP) board, in order to strengthen its programme and widen students' choices. Moreover, the Panel notes that whilst the programme follows the American credit system, the pass grade is at 50% score (Grade E) rather than 60% (Grade D) as in most programmes following the American system. The Panel suggest that, in its benchmarking activities, the College benchmark its course and accumulative grades and pass rates in comparison with those of local, regional and international institutions.

4.9   The Department submitted its cohort analysis to the Panel to allow for an effective comparison to be made across years. In general, the number of students registered in the BAF programme is relatively low but has sequentially increased over the last three years (23 in 2010, 27 in 2011, and 78 in 2012). The programme team interviewed during the site visit claimed that this is because of the old curriculum plan, and consequently the number is expected to increase because of the enhanced curriculum adopted on 2013-2014. The programme team also highlighted that the new campus is expected to play a significant role in attracting more students to the University. The Panel studied the cohort analysis and noted that the ratio of admitted to successful graduates is acceptable. The dropout rate has also decreased year by year during the last three years to reach 16% on 2011. The Panel appreciates the efforts performed by the Department to analyse the cohort data and the actions taken by ASU to improve the retention rate of the students.

4.10   Internship is compulsory for all students registered in the BAF programme. The course worth three credits towards the attainment of the degree and is spread over a minimum of 120 actual hours. It is to be pursued following the completion of at least 90 credits towards the degree. The College has been successful in approaching a significant number of companies in Bahrain who are willing to take in students for the internship period. The Internship Handbook stipulates the architecture of the internship programme. A dedicated internship manager follows up students' progress and is responsible for the communication, coordination and documentation of all internships activities. There is a clear assessment mechanism in place for the internship programme, which is implemented consistently as evidence from the submitted documents. Out of the total grade, 50% is allocated for the assessment of the field supervisor at work, and 50% is allocated for the report produced by the

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students, and the presentation and discussion after completing the internship programme. The Panel is of the view that faculty members should be involved more in the internship process and meet regularly with the industry supervisors to discuss concerns during the internship, not at the end of the process. This will help in ensuring that the internship serves as an appropriate learning experience for the students. Nonetheless, the Panel notes with appreciation that in general, the internship system works well. Moreover, the students showed a high level of satisfaction with the internship programme. The Panel appreciates this well-established arrangements for the internship programme

4.11   The College has incorporated a research component into the revised BAF programme to improve the learning outcomes through introducing a course on research 'AFC499 – Applied Research in Accounting and Finance'. This course is considered the senior year project. During interview sessions, senior students informed the Panel that they were encouraged to enrol in this course. There are clear guidelines in the Student Handbook that organize the relationship between students and supervisors while conducting research activities. There is also information about plagiarism, submission requirements and overall assessment of the research component. The College uses 'TurnItIn' software to detect plagiarism cases. The Department also forms a committee comprising three faculty members to discuss and assess the final research outcome. During the site visit, the Panel examined the quality of a sample of students' research and was satisfied with its level and outcomes. The Panel found the comments and feedback from the committee very informative. The Panel acknowledges the research component and the mechanism in place to manage its delivery and assessment.

4.12   The programme has an Advisory Board with clear terms and conditions for its establishment, roles and responsibilities, and operating mechanism. The Panel studied the submitted documents and found these useful to govern the Board's work. During the site visit, the Panel met with three members of the Board whom demonstrated interest in the programme and indicated their role in increasing the visibility of the programme, curriculum development, recruitment strategies, and programme marketing. There are evidence that the advice and feedback provided by the Board are utilised by the programme team. This is especially evident in the revised curriculum plan that was adopted in the academic year 2013-2014. The Panel appreciates the well-functioning Advisory Board and the feedback provided to enrich the programme.

4.13   The Panel interviewed employers and alumni and notes that employers are satisfied with the quality of the BAF graduates they have employed. The alumni were equally positive when reflecting on their educational experiences at the Department. Moreover, the Panel was provided with evidence of some recent employers and

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alumni surveys that have been conducted by the College. The feedback in general is positive. However, feedback is not sought systematically from the stockholders. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a mechanism to gauge systematically their satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

4.14   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The graduate attributes are clearly stated and links to the programme aims and programme intended learning outcomes.
- The programme has been benchmarked with other similar programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally and the outcomes of the benchmarking exercises are used to improve the offerings of the BAF programme.
- The assessment policy and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews and students are aware of these.
- Cohort data is analysed and actions are taken to improve the students retention rate.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place for managing and assessing the internship programme.
- There is a well-functioning Advisory Board with clear terms of reference.

4.15   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- develop and implement a mechanism to formalize partnership agreement with all institutions that the programme intend to benchmark against and expand the benchmarking activities to cover all main aspects of the programme
- expand the current internal moderation practice to cover all forms of assessment and expedite the implementation of the external moderation and expand its application to cover all taught courses
- develop and implement a mechanism to define controls on the usage of MCQ and ensure that this is stated clearly in the university's assessment policy
- develop and implement a mechanism that prevents repetition of examination questions across semesters
- develop and implement a mechanism to systematically gauge the employers and alumni's satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

4.16   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates.**

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5. Indicator 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.

5.1 The ASU management system comprises a range of policies, procedures and regulations on university, college and department levels that faculty members are familiar with and are involved in the implementation of those that are relevant to their duties. Examples of existing policies and procedures include a Teaching and Learning and Assessment Strategy, Assessment and Feedback Policy, Staff Development Policy, Academic Staff Promotion Policy, Students at-Risk Policy and Programme Review Policy. The QA policies and procedures stipulate guiding principles and standards for quality assurance on matters relating to teaching and learning, and provide mechanisms for assuring quality and inculcating a quality culture at ASU. Through interviews with the Dean, HoD, and faculty and administration staff members, the Panel notes with appreciation that there are clear policies, procedures, and regulations which faculty members are familiar with, are involved in the implementation of those that are relevant to their duties and apply consistently.

5.2 As stated earlier, the BAF Programme is managed by the HoD and the Programme Coordinator. The SER states that the structure supporting the HoD and the Programme Coordinator to manage the programme consists of the Department Council, Programme and Curriculum Review Committee, Examination Committee, Course Coordinators, and the Student Council, which has representation at all departmental meetings. Various venues such as University, College and Department Council meetings are utilised to ensure that the responsibilities of all members involved in the delivery of the programme are executed in an effective manner. The Panel appreciates that the BAF programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.

5.3 The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) has the overall responsibility for ensuring the consistent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the quality of programmes within the University. The Panel learned during interviews with those responsible for overseeing the quality at the university and college levels that a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual has been developed recently to provide a one-stop shop for all rules and regulations and procedures, and to ensure quality of delivery of academic and administrative operations and maintenance of academic standards. The Panel further learned that quality assurance is operationalized at the college and departmental levels *via* the college and departmental QA units, which are overseen by a university-wide QA coordinating

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group consisting of the QAAC director and the college QA coordinators, among others. For example, the departmental QA Unit is responsible to ensure that programme and course aims and learning outcomes are aligned appropriately to the assessment methods. In addition, the programme is evaluated annually within the Department and through a formal review in four year intervals by the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee to assess their effectiveness and relevance. The Panel was provided with evidence of meetings of the QA Units and the Department Council to buttress their involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of delivery of the BAF programme. The Panel appreciates that the quality management system and arrangements in relation the BAF programme are effective and consistently implemented and reviewed.

5.4   As stated earlier, the QAAC at ASU has oversight responsibility for quality assurance and improvement at the University, and is responsible for ensuring proper alignment of quality assurance processes. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that one of the primary objectives of the Centre is to inculcate a quality culture among both academic and administrative staff. The Panel was provided with evidence on the QAAC conducting regular events and workshops to acquaint staff with best practice approaches in teaching and learning. Moreover, ASU commissioned a local university in 2012-2013 to facilitate a series of workshops on quality assurance for the academic staff. Policies and procedures relating to quality assurance are made available on the university intranet for easy access by staff. Both academic and support staff interviewed showed a clear understanding of the quality management arrangements and the role they are expected to play in ensuring the effectiveness of the provision. The Panel appreciates the commitment of the ASU staff in ensuring the quality of delivery of the BAF programme.

5.5   The Self-Evaluation Report states that ASU has a laid down procedure for the development of new programmes. In terms of the procedure, proposals for introducing new programmes are considered in the first instance by the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee, after which these have to go through the college and university approval processes, and thereafter are submitted to be licensed by the HEC. The Panel notices that no new programmes have been introduced in the last three years. The Panel is satisfied that the procedure ASU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes is adequate.

5.6   The SER demonstrated a number of ways in which the Department reviews and evaluates the BAF programme. These include regular course evaluations and student feedback, student satisfaction surveys, alumni and employer surveys, regular departmental council and programme team meetings, external examination and moderation, and a functioning programme advisory board. The Panel was informed during interviews with academic staff that the Department has introduced a system

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of programme evaluation as from 2013 to assess the overall quality of delivery of programmes. The Panel met with students and alumni who confirmed that they were able to provide feedback on various aspects relating to the quality of provision. The academic staff also confirmed that the process of student evaluation has led to many improvements in the teaching of specific courses. The Panel was informed that ASU is planning to introduce a system whereby programme coordinators will produce an annual Programme Evaluation Documentation (PED), with inputs from faculty and programme Advisory Board, to identify weaknesses and strengths in the delivery of programmes. The Panel encourages the Department to expedite the implementation of the system.

5.7   In terms of the ASU Programme Review Policy, the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee (PCRC) is responsible for reviewing the BAF programme in a four year cycle. The review process requires the PCRC to gather feedback from teaching staff, students and other stakeholders such as employers and alumni to ascertain the relevance and currency of the programme, and to assure alignment of the PILOs to the college and university vision and mission statements. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the last internal review was conducted in 2013 in preparation for this review. The Panel acknowledges the tenacity with which the programme is reviewed.

5.8   ASU collects regular course evaluations and student feedback near the end of every semester. In addition, the Panel was provided with evidence of surveys conducted recently to seek feedback from employers and alumni. However, these are not conducted regularly. Evidence was provided during the site visit of some previous surveys and departmental meetings that were held to consider the findings of these surveys. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that some of the notable findings from recent surveys have been employers' perception that ASU graduates generally lack good writing and computer skills and also exhibit unsatisfactory problem-solving skills, but show a high propensity to learn on the job. The Panel was informed that actions have been taken in terms of curriculum and course reviews to address these shortcomings. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal way that is executed systematically to collect and act upon stakeholders' feedback. The Panel recommends that ASU should adopt more robust procedures to collect, analyse and respond to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to the stakeholders on actions taken to address the identified issues.

5.9   ASU has a Staff Development Centre which oversees the professional development of the academic staff and is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of staff training programmes. In addition, there is an Academic Staff Development Policy that stipulates the basis for an academic staff development budget and specifies some development initiatives and activities that are supported as part of academic

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staff professional development. These include providing financial assistance for conference attendance and financial support and release time for academic staff to upgrade their qualifications or undertake other scholarly activities. During the site visit, the Panel visited the Staff Development Centre in ASU. The Panel learned that the Centre ensures continues development for faculty members is in place. This is achieved through, annual workshops, participation in professional training, and memorandum of understanding with professionals bodies. The Centre keeps electronic records for every faculty member who attend professional development activities and trainings. The staff development policy is translated to a yearly plan with allocated budget for staff training and development. A number of the interviewed academic staff confirmed that they have benefited from the staff development programme. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements in place to provide professional development opportunities for faculty members. The appraisal system used also includes a section on the staff training needs. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal process to link the professional development needs of the academic staff to the actual activities conducted. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process to the professional development activities attended by individual staff members.

5.10   The Department relies on internal and external stakeholders to gather intelligence about the local labour market, one of which is the personal experience of its part-time staff members and the external members of the programme Advisory Board, many of whom have several years of experience in the local labour market. In addition, ASU has links through employers and its alumni to market intelligence. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of a systematic scoping of the labour market. The Panel recommends that the institution develop and implement a formal mechanism for contentious scoping of the labour market needs to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and serves the market needs.

5.11   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There are clear policies, procedures, and regulations which faculty members are familiar with, are involved in the implementation of those that are relevant to their duties and apply consistently.
- The BAF programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.
- There are effective quality management system and arrangements in relation to the BAF programme that are consistently implemented and reviewed.
- Both academic and support staff have good knowledge and understanding of the quality assurance system used and are committed to ensuring the quality of the delivery of the BAF programme.

- There is an effective programme review system that has led to major improvements in the curriculum.

5.12   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- adopt more robust procedures to analyse and respond to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to the stakeholders on actions taken to address the identified issues
- develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process to the professional development activities attended by individual staff members
- develop and implement a formal mechanism for contentious scoping of the labour market needs to ensure that the programme is up-to-date.

5.13   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.**

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6.   Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/QQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

There is confidence in the Bachelor in Accounting and Finance programme of the College of Administrative Science offered by the Applied Science University (ASU).

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