

الهيئة الوطنية  
للمؤهلات وصنمان جودة التعليم والتدريب  
National Authority for Qualifications &  
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

## **Programmes-within-College Reviews Report**

**Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance  
College of Business and Finance  
Ahlia University  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 18-20 November 2014  
HC054-C2-R054**

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## Acronyms

ADREG	Admission and Registration System
ATDC	Ahlia Training and Development Centre
AU	Ahlia University
BSAF	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance
BSBF	Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance
BSEF	Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance
BSMIS	Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System
BSMM	Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CEAB	The College External Advisory Board
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CME	The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
CRC	Curriculum Review Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
ISG	Institut Supérieur de Gestion

MBA	Master's Degree in Business Administration
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QA	Quality Assurance
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training-Bahrain
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
TLAC	The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
UC	University Council
UQAC	University Quality Assurance Committee

# 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.*

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 <b>Indicator 1</b> is not satisfied	

## 1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Ahlia University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Business and Finance was conducted by DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 18-20 November 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the college. These are Bachelor’s degree in Economics and Finance, Bachelor’s degree in Banking and Finance, Bachelor’s degree in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor’s degree in Management and Marketing, Bachelor’s degree in Management Information Systems and Master’s degree in Business Administration.

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

AU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 12 May 2014 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Business and Finance with the site visit taking place on 18-20 November 2014. In preparation for the review, AU conducted self-evaluation of all the programmes

offered by the College and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 27 July 2014.

The DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Business Administration, Economics, Finance, Banking, Management, Marketing, Management Information System, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised eight 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 AU will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its Bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance (BSEF). The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of AU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, AU is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to AU 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 faculty in the BSEF programme and the interviewed staff members of the institution.

### **1.3 Overview of the College of Business and Finance**

The College of Business and Finance is one of the six colleges within Ahlia University (AU). The College was established in 2002 with a mission 'to provide high quality business education through experiential learning in a collegial and intellectually stimulating environment' as stated in the Self-Evaluation Report.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: Department of Banking and Finance, Department of Accounting and Economics, Department of Management and Marketing and Department of Management Information Systems. The College offers five undergraduate programmes including Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance, Bachelor's

Degree in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems and Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing. In addition to, the Master's degree in Business Administration. At the time of the site visit, the total number of students in the College was 1437 with 46 specialized faculty members contributing to the delivery of all the programmes.

#### 1.4 Overview of the Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance

The Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance (BSEF) programme has been offered since the 2003-2004 and was patterned on the programme offered by Brunel University, UK. The BSEF programme is designed to prepare students for careers either in commercial and investment banking or in finance/treasury departments in corporation and governmental organizations. Since 2002-2003, 18 students have graduated from the programme. There are nine full-time administration staff within the College who contribute to the programme; and the programme is supported by eight full-time teaching staff as well as one part-time staff. The BSEF programme had its first intake in September 2004 and one student graduated from its first batch in August 2006. In 2013-2014, 26 students were enrolled in the programme. Most of the registered students in the BSEF programme are Bahrainis.

#### 1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

**Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
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
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Confidence</b>



## 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 Ahlia University has clear vision and mission statements at both the university and college levels. These statements are available and accessible to staff and students *via* a variety of methods including the Ahlia University Catalogue and the university website. The Bachelor of Economics and Finance (BSEF) programme framework is aligned to programme aims, objectives and programme intended learning outcomes to support the achievement of the college's mission, vision and its strategic plan. From interviews with staff, the Panel confirmed that the programme aims are developed to achieve the vision statements of the College and the University. The Panel appreciates that the aims of the BSEF programme are clearly stated and well-aligned with the vision and mission of the College and the University.
- 2.2 The BSEF programme consists of 132 credit hours (24 university requirements, 24 college specific requirements, 78 major requirements and 6 credits free electives) distributed over 44 courses. The curriculum of the BSEF programme covers all main aspects in Economics and Finance that are required in a bachelor degree of this area of specialisation. The curriculum is well-organized to provide academic progression year-on-year and course-by-course, with suitable workloads for students. The BSEF programme is structured to enable students to get their degree in four academic years. The latest review of the BSEF programme was conducted in 2013-2014. This review resulted in many changes that were introduced to the programme such as adding (STAT202), (ECON310), (ETHC391) and (BFRM498). The SER indicates that to insure linkage between theory and practice in the curriculum, the programme offers (BANK401), (ECON420), (ECON421), (FINC421) and (FINC431). Moreover, there are certain courses that focus more on the theoretical aspect such as (BANK302), (ECON201), (ECON202), (ECON303), (ECON410) and (FINC321). In addition to 18 credit hours focusing on practical skills including courses such as (ECON301), (ECON321), (BANK410), (FINC210), (FINC310) and (FINC320). The Panel interviews with students and the structure of the programme confirmed that there is a general satisfaction with students' workload. The Panel reviewed samples of course specification provided in the course files and noted that 100 to 200 level courses provide the sufficient level of knowledge and skills necessary to move to higher level courses. Although there is evidence of the use of software (myeconlab) and invited guest speakers in the 100 and 200 level courses, the Panel believes that these entry-level economic courses could benefit more from practicality that could be introduced by having students work on real projects tackling current economic issues of the region. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum of BSEF programme is

well-organized to demonstrate academic progression, a balance amongst knowledge, skills, theory and practice with suitable workloads for students.

- 2.3 The syllabus of the BSEF in general has good breadth and depth and is consistent with similar programmes, locally and internationally. All course specifications provided to the Panel follow a unified template detailing the course code, course title, number of credits, prerequisites, description and objective of the course along with contact details of the instructor. This is followed by the specification of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), the course structure, the teaching materials and assessment breakdown. Samples provided of 400 level course syllabi show reference to new trends, current research and professional practice; and this has been confirmed during the interviews with faculty and students. The Panel acknowledges that the topics are relevant to the discipline. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that some of the recommended textbooks for the 100 and 200 level economics courses need to be updated with the most recent editions. The Panel appreciates that the syllabus has sufficient breadth and depth to support and enhance the delivery of the programme.
- 2.4 The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are outlined in the programme specification. The programme has 13 PILOs divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding (A1-A3), subject-specific skills (B1-B3), thinking skills (C1-C3), and general transferrable skills (D1-D4). The specified ILOs meet students' expected achievements in similar programmes as they match the programme aims and objectives and are appropriate for the level of the degree. Staff interviewed clarified that the PILOs were developed with due regard to ensure that they are aligned and covered in all programme aims and objectives. The Panel notes that the interviewed staff has clear understanding about the PILOs and how these PILOs support the delivery of the programme aims and objectives. The Panel is satisfied that the PILOs are suitable for the programme and its level. Examples include the emphasis on problem solving, communicative skills, teamwork, organizational skills, business ethics and social responsibility. These are clearly aligned with the PILOs. The Panel appreciates that the PILOs are clearly stated and aligned to the programme aims and objectives.
- 2.5 Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are clearly stated in the course specifications. The SER presents a Curriculum Skills Map which shows how each course ILO contributes to the overall programme learning outcomes. The Panel studied the samples provided and noted that, in general, CILOs are appropriate to the course content and level. However, the Panel notes that there are three courses (MAKT321), (INTD336) and (INTD209) that are mapped against all PILOs. The Panel suggests that the College revise the contribution of these courses in the Curriculum Skills Map to ensure a more selective mapping of these courses to the PILOs. Staff interviewed clarified that they have embraced problem solving, communicative

skills, teamwork, organizational skills and business ethics in the BSEF programme to ensure that graduates are able to acquire the desired learning outcomes and face the challenges of workplace. The Panel acknowledges that in general the CILOs are well-drafted and match course contents and levels.

- 2.6 According to the SER and the Guidelines of Internship Programme document, the BSEF programme has a mandatory internship course (INTR400) allocated six credit hours over a period of eight weeks comprising a minimum of 180 working hours. The Panel noted that the total credit hours allocated to the internship course is higher than the expected norms and recommends that the College revise it. During interviews, staff clarified that students have to complete 90 credit hours of the programme requirements to be eligible to register for the internship course. According to the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Internship Programme students are required to submit bi-weekly reports and a final report for the internship. Although the SER states that the internship course is 'compulsory unless there are extenuating circumstances.' It also clarifies that under certain circumstances students can elect to take two elective courses (three credit hours each) instead of taking the internship course specifically for those students who are already employed or the market conditions offered limited internship opportunities. As specified in the SER and confirmed during interviews, a set of suggested advanced courses is offered to replace the internship programme including (FINC499), (ECON303) and (ECON420). Despite the above mentioned, the conditions for exemption are not set out in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship. Moreover, the Panel notes that the internship course is not included in the eight semester study plan although the two elective courses which are taken as a substitute for the internship course are mentioned in the plan. The Panel recommends that the College revise the contribution of the internship course and specify reasons for exemption to ensure equivalent learning outcomes are achieved amongst all students despite the options they take.
- 2.7 AU has developed a teaching and learning plan that is implemented across the University. This plan details a variety of teaching and learning approaches many of which encourage the development of students' responsibility for their learning. These teaching and learning approaches include group work, practical based learning (through the use of software in some courses, case studies, guest lectures from industry). Students are also encouraged to self-study with mandatory research assignments in some courses. This has been confirmed during students' interviews and the detailed documentation provided in the course files such as (ECON310), (ECO410) and (ECON499). These methods do contribute to achieving the programme aims and ILOs as they include research skills, enhance student's communication skills and reinforce their responsibility of their own learning. The Panel appreciates this variety of teaching and learning approaches used by the programme team that

facilitates the achievement of the ILOs. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel encourages the Department to reinforce the use of those approaches in the 100 and 200 level courses of the BSEF programme.

2.8 There is a University level assessment manual ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and well-communicated to students and academic staff. There are transparent mechanisms for grading students' achievement and answer keys are provided for the examinations. The assessment policy also requires giving timely feedback to the students. However, from the samples provided, the Panel noted that the written feedback provided to students is limited. The Panel encourages staff to give detailed written feedback on students' work. The syllabi of courses provided have a dedicated column where the assessments are mapped to the ILOs. During the interviews, it was noted that the students are also aware of the appeal procedures in case they would like to challenge their grades. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that the Student Handbook does not include a section detailing all aspects of assessment. The Panel encourages the College to address this issue. Staff interviewed clarified that the assessment tools include formative and summative methods and are divided into course work (60%) and the final examinations (40%). Course work includes quizzes, assignments, presentations, case studies and worksheets. Furthermore, there are marking guidelines for both mid-term and final examinations and there is a developed policy on the use of external moderation which was confirmed during interviews with staff and the BSEF external and internal examiners/assessors. In reviewing all the evidence, the Panel notes with appreciation that there are transparent and fair policies for student assessment that states how assessment should be linked to the ILOs and is well-known to both faculty and students.

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

- The aims of the BSEF programme are clearly stated and well-aligned with the vision and mission of the College and the University.
- The curriculum of BSEF programme is well-organized to demonstrate academic progression, a balance between knowledge and skills, and theory and practice with suitable workloads for students.
- The syllabus has sufficient breadth and depth to support and enhance the delivery of the programme.
- The programme intended learning outcomes are clearly stated and aligned to the programme aims and objectives.
- There is a variety of teaching and learning approaches that are used by the programme team to facilitate the achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- There are transparent and fair policies for assessment that are well-known to both faculty and students and provide opportunity for students to appeal.

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

- revise the number of credit hours allocated for the internship programme
- revise the contribution of the internship course to the programme and specify reasons for exemption to ensure equivalent learning outcomes are achieved amongst all students despite the options they take.

## 2.11 **Judgement**

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

### 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 AU has an overall university admission policy which stipulates a provision of acquiring a secondary school certificate or its equivalent for admission to its undergraduate programmes. However, no minimum score is specified for the high school certificate. There is an English Language placement test for all students prior to registration in the degree programme. Applicants with international tests such as IELTS or TOEFL are exempted from the English Language test. The Panel is concerned that no exact cut-off marks are given for the secondary education score, the score of the English Language placement test and the score of IELTS or TOEFL to be exempted from the English Language placement test. Applicants holding a secondary education certificates older than five years are considered mature students and are required to pass, in addition to the English Language placement test, an examination in Mathematics. Transfer students are accepted in the programme if they have successfully completed at least one semester in another recognised institution. A maximum of 66% of the courses can be transferred if the applicant scores at least a 'C' grade in those courses. The Panel recommends that AU clearly state its requirements for the high school score and admission tests and make them available to all its stakeholders.
- 3.2 The Panel studied the profile of the admitted students to the BSEF programme and noted that in general it matches the programme aims. These profiles incorporate information on educational background of students, gender, nationality and their Cumulative GPAs in the secondary school certificate. The Panel notes that the high school score for the admitted students ranges between 66% and 99%, which is considered to be acceptable. In interviews with staff, they confirmed that these detailed student profiles helped both course instructors and academic advisors to facilitate students' learning experience and enhance the delivery of the BSEF programme. After studying the admitted students' profile, the Panel noted that students from Arts, Science, Commercial and Technical secondary school tracks are being admitted to the programme. However, through interview sessions, the Panel was not provided with clear systematic approach on the additional support provided to students from different tracks to help them strengthen their background where needed. The Panel recommends that the College conduct a study to evaluate students' profile especially the ones who are not coming from the Commercial or Science tracks against their academic performance and progress to ensure their success. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that the College clearly state actions taken to prepare those students to join the BSEF programme.

- 3.3 The Panel noted that there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the programmes in the College of Business and Finance and is in accordance with the By-Laws. The Chairperson of Department reports to the Dean of the Business and Finance College and manages the day-to-day responsibilities of the programme. There are clearly stated responsibilities for the Chairperson and faculty members were well-informed about their duties. The Panel is satisfied that the programme is well-managed. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned with the long list of responsibilities assigned to the Chairperson as will be discussed under Indicator 4.
- 3.4 There are eight faculty members contributing to the delivery of the BSEF programme. All of them have a wide range of specialisms with a minimum of 10 years median of teaching experience. The Self-Evaluation Report presents the academic ranks of the staff including Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and lecturers. These staff members are also responsible for delivering other programmes offered by the College. Based on the staffs members' involvement in the teaching of other programmes, the student-to-staff ratio was reported in the SER to be 6:1 over the last four years. The Panel studied the provided CVs of the academic staff who are teaching on the programme and confirmed that there is a diversified range of specialisations suitable for the delivery of the programme. Moreover, the Panel was provided with a list of all research papers conducted by the academic staff and noted that the topics were relevant to the discipline. The Panel acknowledges the appropriateness of the qualifications and areas of specialisation of the faculty who teach on the BSEF programme.
- 3.5 AU has well-documented procedures related to recruitment, appraisal and promotion of staff. The SER indicates a proactive approach to the recruitment of staff led by an initial manpower plan prepared by the Chairperson of the Department, consolidated by the Dean of College and the Appointment and Promotion Committee. The Committee's recommendations are passed to the University Council for final approval. Once approved, a letter is sent to the candidate from the President's office. The Panel noted that the retention rate in the last two years was 83.3 which is considered to be satisfactory. New staff members are inducted by the Human Resources Department. During interviews, staff members confirmed their high satisfaction with the induction programme. The Panel appreciates that there is a well-functioning induction programme for newly appointed staff. AU has an annual formal appraisal system. The appraisal form consists of self-evaluation, student evaluation, the Department Chairperson evaluation, quality of research and teaching and contributions to community. The Panel notes that staff appraisal is undertaken regularly. There is a clear policy for promotion that stipulates the criteria needed and the procedures followed for promotion. The Panel was informed that one of the staff members had been promoted in the last two academic year. The Panel studied the sample of promotion file provided and was satisfied with the process. The Panel

appreciates that there are clear procedures for recruitment, appraisal and promotion which are sufficient to retain staff and support the delivery of the programme.

- 3.6 The SER presents information on the Admission and Registration software system (ADREG) to underpin decision-making related to Admissions and Registration, withdrawals, number of sections and courses to be offered. Interviewed staff indicated that training on ADREG is provided to facilitate its use. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with evidence to show that the ADREG system plays a vital role when it comes to making decisions related to programmes management, student progression and also for facilitating the early identification and support for 'at risk students'. During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to view the operation of ADREG. The Panel noted that AU has a dedicated team to add new features to the ADREG system if/when required which makes ADREG a very useful system for the effective running of the programme. The Panel appreciates that the ADREG system is utilized to provide appropriate range of reports to support decision-making.
- 3.7 The SER clarifies that AU has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of student record. According to this policy students' results, students' records, course attendance, transcripts, change in grade, backup and archiving functions are placed on ADREG. The Panel also learned from the interviews that AU has a Disaster Recovery Plan for which data is backed-up on daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis to avoid any potential loss of data through disasters such as fire. There are two backup systems of records: on-site and off-site. There are also arrangements to ensure the security of records through a defined authorization mechanism and the usage of anti-virus and firewalls. Users are provided with unique user-names and passwords for logging onto the ADREG system. During interviews, staff clarified that before marks are approved and are verified by the instructor, the Department Chairperson and the College Dean. Change in grade according to the SER requires multi-level verification by the Department Chairperson, the College Dean and the Dean of Students' Affairs. In addition, there is a quality assurance officer specifically assigned to verify the accuracy of students' records. The Panel is satisfied with the arrangements in place to protect students' records. Interviews with academic and administrative staff confirmed the implementation of the approval and verification procedures. During interviews, the Panel was informed that physical records, final examinations scripts and student files are kept in a locked room. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- 3.8 Following a tour of the university campus during the site visit, the Panel visited the teaching halls which are equipped with electronic projectors, computer laboratories, the university library and other facilities. During the tour to the library, the Panel



reviewed the range of resources available to students including books, e-books, journals, databases and e-resources. The Panel notes that there is a reasonable collection of hardcopy titles, e-books and databases in the AU library and encourages the College to continue increasing the library holdings related to the different business specializations. The Panel was informed that students have access to library holdings on and off campus. The Panel notes the limited private study spaces available for students and that the bookshop is located inside the library. Therefore, the Panel recommends that AU move the bookshop from the library to allow more space for students in the library and to ensure that the library is not crowded especially at the beginning of the academic semester. During the campus tour, the Panel met the library staff, who explained the services that are provided to students. During interviews with senior staff, the Panel learned that the University provides internet services, email services, troubleshooting support, software installation, and access to the University services to all students and faculty. All courses of the BSEF programme are available on 'Moodle' and students get training on how to use it. In addition, there are 11 computer laboratories where each laboratory can accommodate 20 students. These laboratories are used by all programmes offered by the University. The Panel visited some computer laboratories and noted that the College assigns a specialized technician in Information Technology (IT) to help the instructor during class time. The College has also ensured that within laboratories timetables there are free hours that are posted on the laboratories doors where students can have access to work on their projects or assignments. The Panel is satisfied with the arrangements in place to ensure that sufficient resources are available to all students.

- 3.9 AU uses ADREG system to track the usage of resources in laboratories as well as classroom usage. E-resources (databases) are tracked through database logs in the library. These logs are generated by library staff and are used to inform decisions on whether to renew subscriptions to databases. Tracking reports of 'Moodle' usage can easily be generated upon demand. The Panel was provided with minutes of meetings where these reports were discussed and acted upon. The Panel is satisfied with the current tracking system which allows the University to evaluate the utilizations of the laboratories and the e-resources.
- 3.10 During the site visit, the Panel noted that there are support measures in place for the students, provided through the laboratories, library, counselling services, academic guidance and support, and for the use of e-resources. 'Moodle' plays a very crucial role in all of this. All courses in the programme are available on 'Moodle' to support e-learning. During interviews with management and staff and while visiting the resources, it emerged that only certain disabilities are covered due to the current available facilities. There is also a Career Office that provides guidance to students on how to secure internships and permanent jobs. Moreover, every student is

assigned an academic advisor, who provides continuous and necessary support to students in the course of their studies and there is a student counsellor who addresses non-academic problems on which students may require guidance. However, the Panel noted that the Counselling Support Unit is located at a high exposed area. The Panel recommends that AU relocate the Student Counselling Support Unit to a more appropriate location to maintain students' privacy. During interviews, student expressed their high satisfaction with the support and academic advising services that are made available to them. This was also confirmed through outcomes of students surveys. The Panel appreciates the range and quality of support services that are made available to students.

- 3.11 Orientation is provided to all newly-admitted students as well as those transferred from other institutions at the beginning of every academic year. The orientation programme includes sessions on university-wide processes where aspects of the AU Student Guide and AU Catalogue are discussed, as well as college-level and programme-specific processes and requirements, including a discussion of the BSEF programme specification. In interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the efficacy of the orientation programme in providing valuable information about AU's policies and regulations. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements of the induction programme. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that students who are unable to attend the orientation programme usually receive copies of the Student Guide and other documents to read on their own. The Panel encourages the College to put proper arrangements in place to ensure that all newly-admitted and transferred students undergo the orientation process prior to commencement of lectures.
- 3.12 There is a mechanism in place to provide academic support for students, and particularly at-risk students. Part of the academic advising role involves monitoring academic progress of students. According to AU's 'Student at-risk Policy,' students are to be monitored when their GPA falls within a GPA range stipulated in the Catalogue and identified (red flagged) by the ADREG system. According to the AU Catalogue, this minimum GPA depends on the total number of credits that has been completed by the student. Notifications of at-risk cases are sent by email to the student's academic advisor, course instructors, the University Counsellor and the Department Chairperson. The Panel found evidence of minutes of meetings and interventions that have been taken to support identified at-risk students. The Panel appreciates the mechanisms that are in place to timely identify and support BSEF students who are at risk of academic failure.
- 3.13 AU has a learning environment that facilitates opportunities for students to develop themselves through informal learning such as the extra -curricular activities including the AU Magazine, Psychology Club and charity fundraisers. It is also possible for students to attend a semester of one year- abroad as an exchange student

with Institute Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) in France or through the Brunel 2+2 exchange programme. This provides students with an opportunity to understand different cultures and to improve their language skills. Moreover, the learning environment is enhanced through field trips, visits to foreign countries including GCC countries along with the arrangement of special events (e.g. career day, culture day, exhibitions). The Panel acknowledges the faculty's endeavours to provide opportunities for expanding students' informal learning experience.

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

- There is a well-functioning induction programme for newly appointed staff.
- There are clear procedures for recruitment, appraisal and promotion of staff which are sufficient to retain staff and support the delivery of the programme.
- The management information system used (ADREG) provides appropriate range of reports that are utilized to support decision-making.
- There are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- There is a range of high quality support services that are made available to students.
- Mechanisms are in place to timely identify and support BSEF students who are at risk of academic failure.

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

- clearly state the requirements score for the high school certificate, English proficiency tests and university admission tests; and make them available to all stakeholders
- conduct a study to evaluate students' profile especially the ones who are not coming from the Commercial or Science track against their academic performance and progress ; and clearly state actions to be taken to facilitate their enrolment in the programme
- move the bookshop from the library to ensure more study spaces are available to students
- relocate the Student Counselling Support Unit to a more appropriate location to maintain students' privacy.

### 3.16 **Judgement**

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

## 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 Ahlia University has defined 12 generic graduate attributes and 10 specific ones related to the College of Business and Finance to enable students to face workplace challenges. These are embedded in the programme learning outcomes which are delivered by mapping the course syllabus and their ILOs to the PILOs. Whilst, the graduate attributes are not explicitly mapped to the PILOs, these are covered through various means of delivery and assessments. The Panel is satisfied that the graduate attributes have been incorporated into the statement of the various PILOs and are translated to the course level through the Curriculum Skills Map. The Panel notes that interviewed staff show understanding of these attributes and their validation through assessments. Although the Panel appreciates the clearly stated graduate attributes that are embedded within the programme specification; yet the Panel encourages the College to explicitly link the stated graduate attributes to the PILOs.
- 4.2 There is a benchmarking policy developed by AU which was implemented by the BSEF programme team to benchmark the programme against five international universities including Brunel University (UK) which validated the BSEF programme. The scope of the benchmarking covered curricular content and programme structure. Academic standards of the programme are also checked by the process of external examiners who are either academics from Bahrain or from the region. The Benchmark Study of the BSEF programme provides evidence that informal benchmarking of the programme has been done. These comparisons have been done *via* publically available information and internet surfing. It is worth noting that the results of the benchmarking are not incorporated as it has been recently done. The Panel notes the efforts of the College to benchmark its BSEF programme with international universities. However, the Panel recommends that the College establish formal relationships with the institutions it benchmark itself with and expand the benchmarking activities to cover local and regional universities.
- 4.3 There is a clear AU assessment procedure manual that is communicated to academic staff and students as well as a policy for managing the assessment of multi-section courses. These assessment policies and procedures are overviewed by the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) in coordination with the Department. Staff interviewed clarified that the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee receives feedback from the CAQA on the implementation of these assessment procedures and conducts periodical reviews with the aim of

incorporating any improvement whenever needed. During interviews, the programme team highlighted that assessment procedures are subject to regular reviews and are carefully designed to be in line with CILOs. Faculty members discuss the analysis of students' attainment levels of course ILOs as presented in each course evaluation. Moreover, students' grades are approved by the Chairperson before being published. Interviewed students confirmed that a variety of assessment methods is used such as written examinations, case studies, presentations, assignments, and group discussions. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the University has clearly stated procedures for internal verification/moderation and external assessor/examiner. Staff interviewed indicated that feedback is provided on all types of assessments and there is a software to check students' work against plagiarism. This was confirmed by interviewed students. From a perusal of documentation and from the interviews, the Panel appreciates that the assessment methods and procedures are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.

- 4.4 A systematic process to align the assessments with course learning outcomes has been developed and implemented by BSEF programme team. Each course has a designated verifier who is responsible to cross-reference the CILOs with the mid-term and final examinations of the course. External moderation is also utilized to ensure that final examinations properly assess the achievements of the learning outcomes. The Panel is satisfied that AU has developed an ILO Assessment Matrix which enables a sufficient alignment. Moreover, interviewed faculty members indicated that they discuss the analysis of students' attainment levels of course ILOs as presented in each course evaluation report. During the site visit, the Panel reviewed the provided course specifications and noted that assessment methods are set out in line with their relevant ILOs, title of the topic, and the specific teaching method and the weightings of the different assessment used. Both formative and summative assessments were documented. Interviewed staff clarified that AU organized several workshops on CILOs and PILOs and assessment. The Panel reviewed the provided samples of assessments and is satisfied that they are robust in ensuring that the CILOs have been met. The Panel acknowledges that the College has effective mechanism to ensure that assessment is aligned with the course ILOs to enhance the academic standards of the BSEF graduates.
- 4.5 The College of Business and Finance follows AU's internal verification procedure which is applied to the BSEF programme. All course syllabi and final examinations are subjected to internal verification. This is done by a faculty member nominated by the Department Chairperson, two weeks before the commencement of the semester. The internal verifier has to fill in a form entitled 'Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specifications.' The feedback of the internal verifier is submitted to the course instructor who in turn is responsible for incorporating any necessary changes

prior to distributing the course specification to students. The SER provides a comprehensive description of the duties of the internal verifier. During interviews, the Panel learned that the internal verifier has to verify final examinations where he/she has to evaluate the relevance of the questions to the course level, structure of the question paper, marking scheme or rubrics and the appropriateness of the assessment tools to measure the achievement of the learning outcomes by adhering to the unified ILO Assessment Matrix. The internal verifier has to submit 'Internal Verification of Final Examination' form to the Department Chairperson. Post moderation is conducted by the Internal Moderation Committee which is formed to moderate the results of the final examination scripts including scripts with high, average and lowest marks. This committee consists of three members, the Department Chairperson, the instructor or course coordinator in the case of multi-sectional courses and a third faculty member. Finally, the whole process is monitored by AU's Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA). The Panel notes that other tools of assessments, which are allocated more than 40% of the total mark, are not subjected to internal verification. The Panel recommends that the College expand its internal verification procedure to cover all forms of assessment.

- 4.6 Ahlia University has a unified external assessment system which is implemented by the College of Business and Finance. The SER states that external moderation is done 'annually for every academic programme offered by CBF' and external assessors' are nominated by the College Council and are appointed for two years. AU's Assessment Manual provides a comprehensive description of the role of the external assessors. During the site visit, the Panel learned that external assessors have to produce a detailed report on programme specification, course syllabus, the linkage between the course and programme ILOs, validity and reliability of the final examination questions and the level of its difficulty along with scrutinising samples of final examination scripts with high, average and low marks. The feedback of the external assessor is reviewed by the Department Chairperson who in turn submits the report to the University's Vice President for Academic Affairs and /or Assessment Committee as appropriate. The external assessors' recommendations are taken into consideration in the following academic year. From interviews with staff and after examining samples of external assessors' reports; the Panel appreciates that there are processes to ensure that external assessors' feedback is disseminated and acted upon. However, the Panel recommends that AU expand the external moderation process to cover more types of assessments.
- 4.7 During the site visit, samples of students' assessed coursework from different courses were provided to the Panel. The provided samples clearly show that students' work is of an appropriate standard and is consistent with similar programmes offered regionally and internationally. The Panel notes that assessment tools are well-aligned with course intended learning outcomes. The Panel also

examined the provided sample of graduation projects and noted that the level of these projects are in general of an acceptable level. Interviewed staff, highlighted that according to AU's regulations, students are expected to check their work through 'Turnitin' software before submitting it to their instructors. During interviews, students confirmed the use of 'Turnitin' to check their submitted work against plagiarism. The Panel acknowledges that the level of student work is appropriate to the programme type, level and ILOs.

- 4.8 Both internal and external independent scrutiny are used by AU in its effort to ensure that BSEF graduates meet the programme aims and ILOs as expressed in students' results, graduation projects and grade distribution. The programme aims to train students to become professionals in the commercial fields, especially in vital areas such as financial institutions and markets, government services and international organizations and this was confirmed by the conducted interviews with alumni. The SER states that 'in the past three years, 68% of the programme graduates had a Grade Point Average (GPA) of at least 2.26 and 3.48' The average time for a BSEF student to graduate is 4.53 years, which is at an acceptable level for a four year programme. The quality of the programme graduates is further confirmed by graduate exit surveys and graduate acceptance in international graduate programmes. The Panel is of the view that the graduates' achievements as demonstrated above meet the programme aims and ILOs.
- 4.9 Statistics provided by the BSEF programme in the SER indicate that out of the 63 admitted students since the programme inception, 20.6% have discontinued their studies and the remaining 79.4% have either graduated or are currently enrolled. The mean length of study of BSEF students since the inception of the programme is 4.53 years with a standard deviation of 1.01 years. This is good for a four year programme. Since programme inception, the average yearly retention rate was more than 67%. The graduates' destination shows that 60% proceeded to appropriate employment in their field of study while 23% proceeded to other fields. The Panel notes that the statistics provided reflect in general a normal cohort progress. However, the Panel is concerned with the percentage of students discontinuing their studies and recommends that the College conduct a study to investigate the reasons for these attrition and develop and implement a mitigation plan.
- 4.10 The BSEF programme has a work-based learning component (INTR400), which has clear guidelines and specification. A supervision form follows closely the progress of the students. It is worth noting that 67% of BSEF students have completed their internship since 2006-2007. From interviews, the Panel learned that these internships are held in key players banks in Bahrain such as Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (BBK) and National Bank of Bahrain (NBB). The Panel studies the samples of reports provided and noted that these reports are of manageable length and capture the

activities that the students are engaged in as well as their learning experience. The course specification of (INTR 400) clarifies that the internship programme enables students to link theory with practice. The Panel's interviews with the alumni and students revealed that they were satisfied with the internship and stressed that they had the opportunity to link the theoretical knowledge with practice. The Panel is satisfied with the guidance provided to students during the internship period.

- 4.11 The BSEF programme has an element of undergraduate project (ECON/FINC499) with well-stated guidelines to govern its implementation. The guidelines cover the processes for the undergraduate project, roles and responsibilities of the various parties, examination and deadlines. According to the SER, 'guidelines have been periodically rewritten over the past five years by an *ad hoc* committee for student undergraduate and post-graduate projects of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC)'. During interviews, students and alumni confirmed that the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project are clear, transparent and well-implemented. Several parties are involved in evaluating the students' projects including the project supervisor, the Department Chairperson and the Internal Examiner and Examination Committee. Each student is assigned a project supervisor who is a full-time faculty member with three years of teaching experience at university level. His/her role is to provide academic guidance and support to facilitate the writing of the graduation project. Two internal examiners are assigned to reach an independent judgement on the quality of the written project and the oral examination. The Examination Committee finalises the assessment and inform the student of the result, and typically consists of the supervisor and the two internal examiners. It is worth noting that students are obliged to take (BFRM498) course before registering for (ECON/FINC499) course. As the former is a research method course where students get the necessary training on how to formulate a research topic and conduct research while the latter is the graduation project course where students write about their projects and results reached based on their findings. Interviewed staff clarified that the project is a component of the programme that successfully assesses the technical and practical learning skills. During interviews with students and alumni, it was noted that students have a great degree of freedom in the selection of the topic for their projects and they are given clear guidance on the supervisory arrangements. The Chairperson of the Department tracks the supervision of the undergraduate project through ADREG. All submitted projects go through an anti-plagiarism software. The Panel reviewed a number of graduation projects and noted that the level of these projects are in general acceptable. During interviews with students and alumni, the Panel noted that the objectives of the undergraduate project are well-understood by all involved parties. Interviewed alumni expressed their appreciation for the support they received from their supervisors from the time they choose their topic until they submit their projects. The



Panel appreciates that there are guidelines for the undergraduate project which are clear, transparent and well-implemented.

- 4.12 The College of Business and Finance has a functioning College External Advisory Board (CEAB). Members of this Board hold senior positions representing different business sectors; both private and public. The roles and responsibilities of the Board members are clearly defined in a set of guidelines. Minutes of Meetings and interviews with members of the Board suggest that it is active and that the College takes their role seriously. During interviews, there was clear evidence that the BSEF programme enjoys constructive feedback from the CEAB; one amongst others is how to increase the number of students in the BSEF programme. The Panel appreciates the active involvement of CEAB in providing constructive feedback to improve the BSEF programme in order to fulfil the local market needs.
- 4.13 Ahlia University has a Centre for Measurement and Evaluation that is responsible for conducting two annual surveys to measure the level of satisfaction amongst its alumni and their employers. These surveys are analysed to provide an effective feedback on the quality of the programme and the academic standards of its graduates. Results of the two recent surveys analysis confirmed that alumni and employers are satisfied with the programme and its content. The employer survey results indicate that about 90% of the employers are satisfied with the quality of the graduates and are willing to recruit more BSEF graduates. The survey results also indicate that 77.14% of the alumni are satisfied with their learning experience. The Panel conducted interviews with employers and alumni and was satisfied with their responses. Interviewed employers provided very positive feedback on the BSEF graduates. The alumni expressed their satisfaction with the efforts and support provided by the academic staff. The Panel appreciates the high level of employers' satisfaction towards the BSEF programme and its graduates.
- 4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There are clearly stated graduate attributes that are embedded within the programme specification.
  - There are clear assessment procedures and methods which are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.
  - There are processes in place to ensure that external assessors' feedback is disseminated and acted upon.
  - There are guidelines for the undergraduate project which are clear, transparent and well-implemented.
  - There is a College External Advisory Board which is actively involved in providing constructive feedback that is used to improve the programme.

- There is a high level of employers' satisfaction towards the BSEF programme and its graduates.

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

- establish formal relationships with the institutions the College wants to benchmark the BSEF programme with; and expand the benchmarking to cover local and regional universities
- expand the internal verification procedure to cover all forms of assessment
- expand the external moderation process to cover more types of assessments
- investigate the reasons for students' attrition rate and develop and implement a mitigation plan.

#### 4.16 **Judgement**

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

## 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 AU Policies and Procedures Manual contains a wide array of institutional policies and procedures ranging from human resources, accounting, purchasing, ICT and safety to general administration. The Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) has the overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of policies and procedures across the University. From submitted documents and interviews with academic, administration and QA staff, the Panel is satisfied that the institution's policies are applied effectively with the involvement of the staff. The Faculty Handbook summarises the university policies and procedures while the 2010 University By-Laws provides more details of these policies. The Quality Assurance Manual which was developed in 2012 provides a 'one-stop-shop' for policies and procedures relating to quality assurance. The manual includes policies and procedures on admissions and development, programme reviews as well as regulations pertaining to academic study. The Panel appreciates that there is an implemented mechanism to ensure consistent application of the policies and procedures across the programme.
- 5.2 From the SER and interviews with senior faculty, the Panel learned that the BSEF programme is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Chairperson of the Department, who assumes responsibility for coordination of the programme and its quality and represents the programme in the CAQA. The Department Council headed by the Chairperson evaluates the options for effective decision-making concerning the BSEF programme. The Chairperson represents the Department in the College Council and preserves the interest of the BSEF Department and programme. The BSEF Departmental Programme Review Committee serves as a platform to review the programme and generate new ideas; and according to the SER, 'the Departmental Chairperson interacts regularly with a range of stakeholders who also provide a wide range of different types and sources of information pertaining to the programme and its management.' The SER and supporting documentation provides evidence of active leadership of the programme. The Panel also interviewed academic and administrative staff, including representatives from CAQA, who provided the Panel with evidence of effective leadership of the BSEF programme. The Panel acknowledges that the BSEF programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates a responsible leadership. However, as stated under indicator two, the Panel is concerned with the high administrative load exerted on the Chairperson and recommends to address this issue.

- 5.3 AU has developed a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual which was developed in 2012 to provide 'a one-stop shop' for policies and procedures relating to quality assurance. As previously noted, that the CAQA has the overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the quality management system at the University to ensure consistent implementation and quality delivery of the programme and is supported by an array of university-level committees and structures that complemented the CAQA's work. The Panel found that both the College Council and Department Councils play a significant role to complement the work of the CAQA. The Panel was provided with evidence of several meetings to show the involvement of these structures in monitoring and evaluating the quality management system in relation to programmes offered within the College. The Panel appreciates that the quality management system is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- 5.4 The CAQA conducts regular training workshops to acquaint staff with the policies and procedures pertaining to the programmes offered by the College in particular, and best practice approaches in teaching and learning in general. The Panel established that the training workshops that were conducted between 2011 and 2014 were very well-attended by staff. The QA policies and procedures are also made available on the university intranet for easy access by staff. During interviews with the academics and support staff, the Panel noted that they have a good understanding of the implemented quality assurance arrangements in the College and their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision. The Panel appreciates the commitment of the AU staff in ensuring the quality of delivery of the BSEF programme.
- 5.5 The policy and procedures for the development of new programmes are contained in the Policy on Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes and an accompanying Process for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes. The process of developing new programmes is typically initiated at the Department or College level following a needs assessment and feasibility study, and recommendations thereafter go through a series of approvals which eventually culminate at the University Council for approval before submission to the Higher Education Council for licensing. The Panel established that the College did not identify the need for establishing new programmes since the establishment of its current programmes and rather concentrated on improving the existing ones. During interviews with the senior management, the Panel learned that there are plans to introduce a host of new programmes when the University eventually moves to its new building. The Panel acknowledges the procedures that AU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes.

- 5.6 According to the SER, internal programme evaluations are typically conducted at the beginning of each semester by the Department in collaboration with the CAQA and the TLAC. The process involves ‘validation’ of programme specifications and course syllabi in terms of learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, textbooks, and making use of an Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specification template. Moreover, student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester to generate feedback on teaching and learning. Minutes of meetings and interviews with the academic staff confirmed that the process of students’ evaluation has led to many improvements in specific courses in the BSEF programme. The Panel notes the internal programme evaluation conducted and the end-of-semester student surveys to generate an ongoing and effective feedback on the quality of teaching. The Panel appreciates the adequacy of the arrangements for the annual evaluation of the programme.
- 5.7 The AU Policy and Procedures for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes requires programmes in the College of Business and Finance to be comprehensively reviewed every three years. In terms of the policy, programme reviews are the remit of the Curriculum Review Committee with support from the TLAC and other related committees, and overseen by the CAQA. The process for reviewing the programme requires information from external reference points such as feedback from course tutors, alumni and employer surveys, benchmarking and market research studies, student evaluations and input from the College External Advisory Board. Documentations provided indicate that the review process benefited a lot from the collected feedback of all the stakeholders. The Panel found evidence of instances where programme review recommendations have been implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Examples include introducing a course in research methods (BFRM498) and a business ethics course (ETHC3910). The Panel appreciates the frequency and diligence with which the BSEF programme is periodically reviewed.
- 5.8 The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) periodically conducts surveys of AU students, alumni and employer. The student surveys tackle the quality of course offering and evaluations of instructors. Feedback collected from students’ surveys flows to the University Council, College Council and Department Council for discussion. The alumni surveys collect information on the quality of the BSEF programme and the learning experience. In addition, the CAQA implements a ‘Quality Periodic Programme Review and Utilization of Feedback’ in order to ensure that feedback is utilised in improving the programme content and delivery. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with some of the recently conducted surveys and follow-up meetings and action plans that have emanated from these surveys. The Panel is satisfied with the dedication and enthusiasm of the CME staff in conducting these surveys.

- 5.9 AU has a dedicated unit, namely the Ahlia Training and Development Center (ATDC), which is responsible for the professional development of both academic and administration staff. The Panel confirmed that the Center has designed a formal staff development plan that seeks to address training and development needs of staff in order to arrange for suitable workshops. The Panel noted that the training programmes are also geared towards attainment of individual staff needs, and hence staff are able to attend workshops in areas that are unrelated to their normal course of duty. The ATDC has furthermore developed a template for evaluating the effectiveness of the workshops that are presented. The Panel found evidence that many academic and administrative staff of the College of Business and Finance have attended workshops on topics such as the use of 'Moodle', design and mapping of programme and course intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning and assessment methodologies, among others. The Panel appreciates the effective arrangements put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and administrative staff.
- 5.10 The BSEF programme depends on its internal and external stakeholders to gather intelligence about the labour market needs. The College External Advisory Board members have extensive years of experience in Bahrain's labour market needs. Furthermore, Alumni Survey and Employer Survey are considered as vital tools when discussing the structure and the content of the BSEF programme. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of systematic formal methods used to assess labour market needs. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism for scoping labour market needs to enhance the BSEF programme design and its delivery.
- 5.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is an implemented mechanism to ensure consistent application of the policies and procedures across the programme.
  - The quality management system at AU is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
  - Ahlia University staff members are committed in ensuring the quality of delivery of the programme.
  - There are adequate arrangements for the internal annual evaluation of the programme.
  - There is a clearly stated policy for the periodical review of the programme that is diligently implemented.
  - An effective arrangements is put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and administrative staff.

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

- revise the workload of the Department Chairperson to ensure effective leadership is consistently provided
- develop and implement a formal mechanism for scoping labour market needs to enhance the BSEF programme design and its delivery.

### 5.13 **Judgement**

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

## 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's Degree in Economics and Finance of College of Business and Finance offered at Ahlia University.**