Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor of Business Administration

University College of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 19 – 23 January 2014

HC024-C1-R024

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Acronyms

BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration
CILO	Course Intended learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EAB	External Advisory Board (at university level)
HEC	Higher Education Council, Kingdom of Bahrain
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MIS	Management Information Systems
PAB	Programme Advisory Board (at department level)
PILO	Programme intended learning outcomes
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UCB	University College of Bahrain

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 **Indicator 1** is not satisfied	

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the University College of Bahrain

A Programmes-within-College review of the Department of Business Administration 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 19-23 January 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the Department; these are Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the BBA based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the University College of Bahrain (UCB), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

UCB was notified by the DHR/QQA in 15 September 2013 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of its Business Programmes with the site visit taking place in 19-23 January 2014. In preparation for the review, UCB conducted its Department self-evaluation of its Business Programmes and submitted the SER with most appendices on the agreed date in 21 November 2013 with the final submission being on 09 December 2013.

The DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field of BBA and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised four external reviewers.

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to UCB 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 BBA.

1.3   Overview of the Department of Business Administration

The University College of Bahrain was established in the year 2001. The Department of Business Administration offers Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA). In 2010-2011 the admission to both programmes was stopped by the HEC. However, admission to the BBA programme was granted again in 2012-2013, whilst the MBA programme remained closed.

The College was established with the aim of preparing students to be successful global leaders in the private and government sectors. It is guided by UCB mission 'The Mission of the University College of Bahrain is to provide Bachelor's and higher degree level courses in the fields of Business Administration, Information Technology, and Communications concomitant with its ability to provide an internationally benchmarked level of education as permitted by its evolving staff and facilities, resources, serving students in Bahrain and the Middle East region'. The College has 304 registered students in the Business Programmes; 45 in the MBA programme and 259 in the BBA programme. The majority of students are Bahraini. There are 12 faculty members in the Department; nine are full-time members and three are part-time members.

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1.4   Overview of the Bachelor of Business Administration

The Bachelor of Business Administration is offered by the Department of Business Administration since 2007. The first student was admitted in the Autumn Semester in 2007-2008. In 2010-2011 the admission to the programme was stopped by the HEC, and hence, there has been a continuous decrease in the number of students in the programme. However, the HEC lifted the admission ban on the BBA programme on the year 2012-2013. Currently there are 259 students registered in the programme.

1.5   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Business Administration

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Does not satisfy
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Does not satisfy
Overall Judgement	**Limited confidence**

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 UCB has a clearly stated mission statement. One of its key objectives is the provision of a Bachelor's degree programme in the field of Business Administration. To achieve this objective an academic framework was developed and is being implemented for the BBA. The Panel is pleased that the active academic framework resulted in a programme improvement plan that addresses problem associated to teaching and learning, PILOs appropriateness, CILOs accuracy and linkages to PILOs. The BBA programme aims are: (1) to educate students with general business knowledge; (2) to prepare students to become future practicing business people; and (3) to enhance lifelong learning skills and personal development. During the site visit the Panel met the BBA senior management team who provided a clear explanation of the academic plan of the BBA programme, its aims, objectives and its relevance to regional needs. The Panel appreciates the aims and objectives of the BBA which are useful and consistent with the mission statement and the strategic goals of the institution.

2.2 The curriculum shows a clear sign of a progression route map and student workload is appropriate and consistent with other BBA programmes. The progression on year-by-year and on course–by-course basis is achieved within the programme structure. The progression is achieved via a system of prerequisites for all courses particularly those taught in years three and four of the programme. This requirement is clearly indicated in the Advising Plan document provided by the BBA programme team during the site visit and is supported by Courses and Prerequisites document. The Panel noted, however, that there are incidences of prerequisites for marketing courses not listed in the relevant course specifications contradicting the information in the Advising Plan. During interviews with the programme team, the Panel learned that this is due to typing errors that have not yet been corrected in the relevant marketing course specifications. During interviews with the programme team the Panel received confirmation on the role of prerequisites in student progression within the structure of the programme. Furthermore, the Panel found during interviews, that students are satisfied with the mechanism put in place by the Department to ensure academic progression. Students in all five concentrations expressed satisfaction with their workload and current structure of the programme and its operation. The Panel appreciates the programme is organized to provide year-on-year progression.

2.3 During the site visit, the Panel learned that the textbooks play a key role in the curriculum providing a basis for each course content. The texts recommended for each course are relevant and provide progression in content covered. During

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interviews, the programme team explained that the course lecturers would discuss the selection of the text books rigorously within the team to ensure that selection of texts provides progression of content on a year-on-year basis. This is embedded practice. Nevertheless, the Panel suggests that a formal mechanism be developed and implemented for the selection of key textbooks used in the programme.

2.4   There are currently five concentrations in operation, namely, Management, Marketing, Accounting, Finance, and Islamic Finance and Banking. The Panel was informed that these areas of specialism/concentration have been selected on the basis of market trends and market demand. However, very little consideration has been given to the associated staffing resources and a viable number of students per concentration to ensure an effective specialism route for students. The Panel is of the view that the number of concentrations offered is excessive in relation to the staff resources available, their specialism, and the student numbers involved. The Panel recommends that the College revise the offered number of concentrations in the light of available resources.

2.5   The Panel received all course files during the site visit. After scrutinizing these files, the Panel acknowledges that these are consistently documented. The Panel appreciates that there is a well-illustrated documentation of courses reflecting the syllabus outline, curricular content, levels, and outcomes meeting the standard normally expected of course specifications documents.

2.6   The Panel appreciates the research active curriculum that is in the concentration of Islamic Finance and Banking as evident from the course files and course specifications. Furthermore, on examining the Islamic Finance publication lists provided and a sample of the research papers published on this topic, the Panel appreciates the good quality research carried out in this area. The Panel encourages the College to expedite the implementation of such practices to other concentrations.

2.7   The programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) are expressed in the programme specifications and there is evidence of attempts to align PILOs with programme aims and objectives. There are 30 programme ILOs divided into four categories: Knowledge and understanding (A1-A5); Subject – specific skills (B1-B15); Thinking skills (C1-C5); General and transferrable skills (D1-D5). During interviews with faculty members the Panel was told of their approach to develop the programme ILOs to ensure alignment with programme aims and objectives. While the Panel found these explanations useful and constructive, it views the number and hierarchy of PILOs to be excessive and sometimes they are not at an appropriate level for the bachelor programme. The Panel recommends that the programme team review the PILOs to reduce them in order to eliminate overlaps and to ensure that they are all at an appropriate level for the programme.

2.8   The Course Intended learning Outcomes (CILOs) are expressed clearly in the course specifications. However, the Panel considers the number of course ILOs to be excessive and some are not well integrated into the programme learning outcomes. The Panel is of the view that there needs to be a set of ILOs specific to the respective concentrations to give depth and differentiation between them. The Panel recommends that the course ILOs be reviewed and revised, ensuring that these are stated as measurable statements and the links to PILOs are justified and complete.

2.9   The mapping of courses to programme ILOs is well documented. While the Panel considers this mapping exercise useful it needs to be revised to be more informative. The Panel encourages the programme team to review and revise this mapping matrix in the light of the above recommendations to construct a useful tool for improving the programme's operations and delivery.

2.10   There is a work-based course that provides work experience via internship for students who have successfully completed 90 credits. This course is highly relevant to the programme providing a direct channel for a student to achieve practical knowledge and skills consistent with the aims and the ILOs of the programme. This course is well structured, has clear assessment criteria, and works well in practice. There are currently over 30 participating companies involved in this internship programme. During interviews with staff, the Panel learned of the operation of this course and its assessment policy which is consistent with the course outline and its learning outcomes. The Panel appreciates the College's efforts to expose students to professional business practice during their internship and thus are able to meet ILOs related to professional practice.

2.11   Teaching methods support the programme in the attainment of its aims and objectives. Methods including lectures and classes which are, by and large, led by the lecturers. There is evidence from the course files that there are student presentations of case studies, and informal learning in a few courses. These teaching methods are the key components of teaching and learning and are used as the principal method of teaching in all courses, which was confirmed in interviews with staff. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that almost all learning takes place via an active – lecturer-led type mechanism and there is very little independent learning and student-centered learning activities currently within the BBA programme. Nevertheless, students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the teaching methods currently being used in the BBA programme. The Panel recommends that the Department investigate ways to expand the range of teaching methods and incorporate independent learning in the curriculum.

2.12   There are suitable assessment arrangements including policies and procedures currently in place to assess student's achievements. The assessment methods, by and

large, are based on summative tests and a final examination. They are clearly presented in the relevant section of each course specification and outline. There is an appeals policy in place that ensures 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 a meeting with the teaching staff, it was evident that they are well aware of the assessment policies and current summative assessment methods and the role these policies play in assessing the students' achievements. During interviews with students, the Panel found that the students are also aware of the current assessments methods used in the programme and their implications. The Panel appreciates the clearly implemented assessment and feedback arrangements.

2.13   The Panel found during interviews with a range of staff that there is limited understanding of the meaning of formative assessment. Further, there is limited written feedback provided to students on their work. Not sufficient evidence is available to suggest a regular and efficient system for the provision of prompt feedback. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal policy on formative assessment and ensure that staff have a common understanding of the term.

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

- The BBA programme aims and objectives are clear and consistent with the mission and the strategic goals of UCB.
- The active academic framework has resulted on a programme improvement plan.
- The programme is organized to provide year-on-year progression.
- There is good and consistent documentation of courses reflecting the syllabus outline, curricular content, levels, progression, advising plan, and outcomes.
- The Islamic Finance and Banking concentration is research active.
- An internship course is in place and provides practical work experience for students consistent with the programme aims and the mission of UCB.
- There are well-defined and fully communicated assessment policy and procedures being implemented.

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

- reduce the number of concentrations offered by the programme
- revise the number of both programme and course ILOs to more manageable numbers to improve students' learning outcomes
- revise course ILOs to ensure that these are stated as measurable statements and the links to PILOs are justified and complete

- investigate ways to expand the range of teaching methods and incorporate independent learning in the curriculum
- develop and implement a policy on formative assessment ensuring that there is common understanding among staff of the term.

2.16   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 There is an acceptable admission policy in place for the BBA programme. The admission requirement to UCB is a secondary school diploma or equivalent with a minimum 60% pass or 2.0 GPA, and a candidate for BBA must have credits in senior English and Mathematics. However, during the site visit, the Panel reviewed the profile of admitted students. The profile of admitted students suggests that the number of students with less than D scores is 51 out of 286. The Panel is concerned about this relatively high ratio since it nearly represents approximately 20% of the students. The Panel recommends that UCB revise the BBA admission criteria to ensure admitted students matches the programme aims.

3.2 During interviews with staff, the Panel found there is not a clear understanding about the equivalence of the three-year foundation English programme with the TOEFL qualification that is required for admission. The Panel found no evidence of a clear measurement grid of the students' level after completing two or three foundation courses. After scrutinizing a sample of English examination papers for the foundation courses, the Panel concluded that the level of assessment is not equivalent to the TOFEL level. Hence, students in the foundation courses may not reach the required 500 TOEFL score to enter the BBA. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement a formal mechanism to assess students' level after completing the foundation courses.

3.3 During the site visit, the Panel found that the academic staff work well together as a team. There are clear lines of accountability on paper, yet this is not operational. The team mainly functions due to embedded practices and senior staff mentoring. The Panel recommends the College establish and implement the formal clear lines of accountability to secure and harmonize the whole process.

3.4 There is not a sufficient number of staff with the appropriate qualifications expected to deliver the programme well. There are 12 faculty members of whom three are part-time faculty. In this regard, the programme's courses/concentrations also require specific skills that are not available since there are no staff with a Marketing background and the only PhD holder teaching Management was the HoD who has many administrative responsibilities. There are no senior academics for the Islamic Finance concentration, Finance concentration and Accounting concentration. More senior academics with specialising in the programme's concentrations need to be appointed. The Panel recommends the College expedite the implementation of a recruitment plan to ensure that the programme is adequately staffed.

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3.5   Evidence of research activity was limited to the research output presented by staff members in the Islamic Finance concentration. The Panel encourages that faculty members develop their research activity in all topics taught in the BBA, including further research outcome dissemination among peers.

3.6   The Panel welcomed the documentation reflecting faculty participation in workshops associated with the improved capacity of their teaching and learning functions. The Panel found the series of workshops on critical thinking, and teaching and learning philosophy very useful to develop the capacity of faculty of business to meet the programme aims.

3.7   The procedures for recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention of academic staff are clearly stated and documented. The Panel learned during interviews with HR staff that the HR department is composed of three qualified persons. The recruitment process is clear and matches usual processes. Staff promotion is also clearly detailed and there is evidence of recent promoted faculty in the Department. Performance appraisal is detailed in the SER, however, it is not implemented for faculty. The Panel recommends that UCB activate the documented faculty appraisal to evaluate their performance. Staff retention is not ensured since the staff turnover rate is very high. The Panel recommends that steps be taken to investigate the high turnover rate in the programme.

3.8   The Panel acknowledges that there is a well-functioning induction process for newly appointed staff. Current staff expressed satisfaction with these arrangements to the Panel. During the induction full-time and part-time staff learn about the assessment policy and other academic policies before commencing teaching classes.

3.9   There is a Management Information System (MIS) in place called the LOGSIS system. LOGSIS is used by the administration and faculty to manage and retrieve various data related to the programme. Examples of information that can be generated by LOGSIS are: list of registered students, list of courses, exam schedule, admission profile, and student registration history. However, the Panel found no evidence that the system usage is optimized. The Panel recommends that the College explore effective usage of its MIS to generate analytical data and cohort analysis for the efficient operation of the programme and the College.

3.10   Policies and procedures are consistently implemented to ensure security of learner records and accuracy of results. There is an active backup plan implemented to store records off campus, thus ensuring disaster recovery. The Panel appreciates UCB's practice of relocating the disaster recovery site to an outsourced partner to improve the high availability of the IT systems.

3.11   During the touring session, the Panel visited UCB facilities and found them to be adequate for the BBA programme. There are sufficient classrooms, halls, computer laboratories, staff offices, wired and wireless network, internet access, and a bookshop. All the classrooms and laboratories are equipped with projectors. In addition to classrooms and two auditoriums (with 70–80 seats), the computer laboratories equipped with PCs c's, connected with wired and wireless networks. The Panel is satisfied with the current physical resources.

3.12   The Panel is concerned about the resources, structure and the lack of study spaces in the library. The library and the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) could be integrated to provide an effective learning environment. The library could be organized in a way to facilitate concentrations' thematic and programme level. The number of book references could be substantially increased to provide adequate references to all concentrations of the programme. Furthermore, the e-Resources for the subject matters taught in the BBA programme is inadequate to support independent learning. The Panel concludes that UCB needs to consider increasing the available resources and restructuring the library space to enhance the learning environment for students.

3.13   The Panel noted during the demonstration that the Blackboard system is used to record attendance statistics and course material uploading. However, the Blackboard system has not been efficiently used to enhance learning, student connections, and lecturers' feedback. During interviews with students, the Panel learned that the Blackboard system is not well implemented to enhance the students learning experience. Furthermore, the students were not aware of the availability of ProQuest database and talked of using the Google search engine for their research. The Panel recommends that UCB educate students about the features of the Blackboard and ProQuest systems to enhance their independent learning experience and utilize the usage of the learning resources.

3.14   There is a tracking system in place. The system allows for data collection but does not go beyond the statistical scope, as per the data provided by the IT staff during the interviews. However, there is no evidence of analysing these data to enable informed decision-making. The Panel recommends that UCB utilize these reporting capabilities to enhance the institute's policies and procedures toward better support for students and faculty.

3.15   In general, there is appropriate student support available. During the touring session the Panel learned that there is counselling services, career office and students activities throughout the year. However, the Panel is concerned about the quality and quantity of professionals available to deliver these services. As observed during the touring session, laboratories lack IT tutors to cope with the students' needs

during the class time. Furthermore, the Panel noted the absence of psychological skills among the students' affairs staff. This needs to be addressed.

3.16   The Panel is pleased with the good well-established arrangements in place for the orientation of new students through an induction tour of the college's most important administrative components and academic facilities. The Panel learned that all students receive a copy of the Student Handbook that is helpful and thorough, and includes useful policies for students.

3.17   There is an academic system in place for tracking at-risk students. However, there is not an effective system in place to ensure appropriate intervention. The submitted evidence only showed examples of warning letters sent to students who were missing 15% of classes or reaching low CGPA (*cf.* below 1.60) thus being put under probation but without demonstrating any further action to be taken except decreasing the workload of students under probation. Furthermore, academic staff in the programme explained during interviews that failing students are merely invited to leave the institute. Consequently, there is no intervention provided for students at-risk, neither is advising support provided to poorly performing students. This is partially due to the abnormally high number of advisees managed by one advisor, i.e. up to 50. The Panel recommends that UCB revise the number of students allocated for each advisor to enhance the advising process and develop a mechanism to support students at-risk.

3.18   A learning environment exists for a bachelor degree level. However, no evidence was presented to the Panel showing that BBA students are encouraged to participate in independent or informal learning through group projects, or the appropriate utilization of Blackboard system to allow students to engage in independent or informal learning activities. This needs to be considered to enhance students learning experience.

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

- There are workshops to build up the capacity of the faculty of business.
- There is staff well-functioning induction programme that involve both full-time and part-time staff.
- There are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure security of learner records, accuracy of results and high availability.
- Good physical resources exist and allow students to follow their courses.
- There are good well-established induction arrangements for all students.

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

- ensure the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims

- develop a mechanism equivalent to TOFEL to assess students after completing the foundation courses
- define and implement formal lines of accountability and responsibility for the co-ordination and quality enhancement
- expedite the implementation of a recruitment plan to appoint qualified and experienced faculty members
- expedite the implementation of the appraisal procedure to evaluate academic staff performance, and investigate staff turnover rate to ensure continuum in terms of student experience
- integrate and use the reporting capabilities of MIS system to enable informed decision-making
- establish a mechanism to monitor and analyse usage of resources for strategic planning purposes
- develop and implement a mechanism to support at-risk students.

3.21 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** 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   The Panel appreciates that the graduate attributes are clearly stated as being Knowledgeable in general business knowledge; Socially responsible to act responsibly and ethically in their profession; Professional business people to act professionally in full compliance with the codes of good practice; Life-long learners to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills; and Collaborative to collaborate with colleagues in their profession in order to optimize the gains within the institution in which they work.

4.2   The Panel noted, however, that the mechanisms are not adequate to ensure that the graduate attributes are theoretically embedded in the construction of the programme. The clearest evidence of this short-coming is in the absence of both programme and course intended learning outcomes (ILOs) directly linking and positioning the attributes into the measured learning and understanding of the programme. There is a strong need to consider the determination of student attributes at the outset of the composition of a programme as the *raison d'etre* or map for the construction of the programme. In this respect the attributes will then underline how the programme is constructed in terms of its individual courses and the programme and course learning outcomes to reflect the attainment of those attributes along with the knowledge and understanding constituting the goals of a particular course. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a mechanism to ensure graduate attributes are embedded in the construction of the BBA programme.

4.3   The evidence made available to the Panel on the benchmarking policy suggests that there was a close collaboration with the American University of Beirut in the adjustment of the programme which was initially adopted from McMaster University. The nature of this collaboration, as indicated to the Panel in the interview sessions, was in the construction of course learning outcomes. There was no written evidence presented to the Panel to indicate that a similar benchmarking process was conducted with the University of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates University and the Egyptian Academic Standards for Business Schools; rather evidence presented in the interviews indicate it was a comparison of alignment and weighting of the overall programme. Benchmarking cannot be restricted only to comparison or the adoption of programmes and ILOs of other institutions. The Panel found no evidence of a formal policy, periodic process for benchmarking. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement a formal policy that allows full benchmarking be carried out and the findings used to improve the programme.

4.4   The Panel appreciates the Department's efforts in seeking advice from an external reviewer on key aspects of the BBA programme. The external advisor's report was made available to the Panel. Based on the report and from interviews with the external reviewer, the Panel found the report be helpful and encourages the College develop and implement a clear action plan with regard to the external review report.

4.5   There is evidence from documentation and interviews conducted that assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular reviews and are made available to students. In addition, the Panel acknowledges that there is a student appeal system in place, and the student grade distribution is approved by the HoD before it is published to students. The Panel finds these arrangements helpful to ensure fairness of student assessment.

4.6   The Panel learned that policies on plagiarism are in place. There is evidence of formal actions toward cases of cheating and plagiarism. "Grammarly" software is used to detect plagiarised materials. The Panel noted that members of the Department and students are aware of the plagiarism policy and the mechanism for its implementation. The Panel appreciates the College efforts to eliminate plagiarism and ensure ethical academic practices.

4.7   The alignment between assessment and outcomes is not uniformly applied across all courses. Evidence presented in most course specifications and course outlines viewed, suggest an inconsistent approach of how individual ILOs are aligned to particular assessment tasks. Nor is the range of assessment tasks sufficiently wide to accommodate different forms of learning. There is some evidence from moderation document that during the pre-assessment internal moderation the moderator attempts to ensure the alignment of each question to course ILOs. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes is harmonized across all courses.

4.8   The Panel appreciates the policy that is used for monitoring the internal moderation of student learning achievement. The SER and the moderation documents described two moderation processes that are used. A Pre-assessment internal moderation is used to ensure meeting course ILOs, academic standards, coverage of course content, exam time appropriateness and marks allocation. There is a Moderation Committee that manages and approves the results of the moderation process. Furthermore, the Post-assessment moderation is a double-marking process to ensure accuracy, consistency and fairness of assessment for students. The Panel appreciates the consistent use of the internal moderation system and encourages the department to analyse the results of internal moderation to improve the programme.

4.9   There is no formal external moderation of BBA courses and hence no feedback is obtained. This is a critical shortcoming particularly for the benchmarking of academic standards against other institutions, which is the prime purpose of the external moderation practice. However, a sample of students assessed work was reviewed by one external examiner. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that the Department needs more than one faculty member to moderate different courses within a range of various concentrations/specializations. The Panel recommends that the College develop a formal and proper mechanism to moderate courses externally to ensure students' achievements are aligned with international standards.

4.10   The Panel is satisfied with samples of student assessed work presented during the site visit. The Panel found the level of assessments is appropriate to the type of programme in Bahrain and possibly higher in the case the course in Islamic Finance and Banking. During the site visit, the Panel examined samples of final examination and other students assessed work for different courses. The Panel found the level of difficulty in the examinations contained in the course files for ACT101, ACT102, FIN301, FIN380, and IBF303 is acceptable and aligned to the typical level expected in other BBA programmes. The Panel found examples of higher level of thinking that involve case studies questions, analysis and critical thinking in the examinations of these courses. Furthermore, FIN375 has realistic case studies given to student to analyse and propose solutions.

4.11   The Panel acknowledges the extent to which the majority of learning outcomes are achieved through the assessment tasks, and the spread of grade distribution suggests that the level of achievement of graduates is satisfactory. Furthermore, there is evidence from the moderation documents that during the pre-assessment internal moderation, the moderator ensures that academic standards are met. However, this process has not been well formalized. The Panel encourages the College to formalize the process that ensures academic standards are met.

4.12   The Panel received a set of relevant data regarding student performance. However, the raw data had not been interrogated to distil the information into a cohort analysis to allow for effective comparison to be made across years and for benchmarking with other universities in Bahrain, the Gulf, or internationally. The Panel did not find evidence of systematic monitoring and tracking of graduation rates, progression, and retention rates over period of time. The Panel recommends that the College develop an effective mechanism to capture student performance in terms of the completion rates of specific courses, and time taken to complete the programme refined as percentages of students graduating out of an original annual intake to gauge the overall performance of the programme and its efficiency relative other institutions.

4.13   UCB has established an Alumni Office to sustain the relationship with its graduates. In addition, the Panel received a Booklet of the Alumni Profiles 2013-2014 that documents graduates' destinations after completing their studies in UCB. Furthermore, all alumnus who were met by the Panel during the site visit are employed or own a business. The Panel noted the summarized table that showed the percentage of first destination of graduates. The Panel appreciates the well-documented arrangements in place to establish relationships with alumni and encourages UCB to formalize a periodic procedure to track employment of all graduates.

4.14   An Internship Practicum Handbook was submitted to the Panel, which shows the architecture of the internship programme. The internship is compulsory for all students within the programme and is spread over a minimum of 160 hours, worth three credits towards the attainment of the degree and is to be pursued following the completion of 90 credits towards the degree. UCB has been successful in approaching a significant number of companies in Bahrain who are willing to take in students for the internship period. This underscores the viability of the programme and allows the Department to place relatively small groups of students with any particular employer. In terms of evidence presented, supervisors from the work environment are required to provide documentary comment on the performance of each student during their internship. The Panel found the internship system works well. There is an internship coordinator who follows up students' progress; who is also responsible for communication, coordination and documentation of all internships activities. There is a clear assessment mechanism in place for the internship programme. At present the intention of the internship programme is essentially to provide the student with practical experience of the work environment that is aligned to programme aims. The Panel appreciates this well-established arrangement for the Internship programme.

4.15   The Panel is pleased to note that an advisory board was constituted in January 2013 and had a second meeting during the course of July. At these two meetings the *modus operandi* was determined, however no significant feedback has yet been fed back into the programme. The composition of the Board offers a fair spread of industry input along with faculty representation. The Board comprises one senior academic from UCB, three executive managers in private sectors, a senior manager in a government organization and an external senior academic from a Canadian university. The Panel noted with satisfaction that external advisory board members are experienced professionals and academics who will enrich the Business programmes with a different perspective and bring innovations and new developments to the attention of the faculty members.

4.16 The Panel noted during the interviews that graduates are satisfied with the programme and a similar satisfaction is expressed by three employers interviewed. Furthermore, the Panel was presented with evidence of the forms used for the conducting of exit, alumni and employer surveys. The Panel encourages the Department to formalize this process and analyse the data generated to reflect the satisfaction with the programme.

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

- Graduates attributes are clearly stated and appropriate for the Bachelor level.
- There is useful feedback from external examiner report about the BBA programme.
- The assessment policies and procedures are implemented consistently.
- The faculty and students are aware of the plagiarism and cheating policy, procedures and arrangements are implemented.
- There is an implemented internal moderation policy in place.
- There is an appropriate level of student's achievement as expressed in the final examinations and other assessments.
- There are implemented arrangements that establish long-term relationship with graduates.
- There are good arrangements with companies in place to support the work-based learning programme.
- There is a functioning Advisory Board for the Department and which contains a wide range of expertise.
- Graduates and employers are satisfied with the programme.

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

- develop and implement a mechanism to ensure graduate attributes are embedded in the construction of the programme
- develop and implement a benchmarking policy that allows effective benchmarking and the findings used to improve the programme
- ensure learning outcomes are aligned to the assessment tasks for all courses is consistent and harmonized
- develop and implement an external moderation mechanism such that moderation of the final year courses becomes more rigorous
- institute a regular system of cohort analysis for the BBA programme.

4.19 **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   UCB has a number of quality assurance policies, procedures, and regulations which are intended to govern the academic programme. These documents are guiding the management, teaching and learning at its premises, some of which are, By-laws for the Award of Bachelor's Degree, Student Assessment Policy, Internship Practicum Handbook and Guidelines, HR Policies and Procedures, Student Handbook and Faculty Guidebook. However, the Panel found during the site visit that some of the policies have not been approved while others are not yet implemented. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that the Research Policy is still being discussed and is not approved while there is no evidence of benchmarking, external moderation, introduction of new programmes, and annual reviews of the programmes policies being applied. Moreover, the Panel received the Quality Assurance Management System Plan that turned to be a simple timeline for each proposed policy. There is no evidence of an action improvement plan for the proposed quality assurance system. The Panel recommends that UCB develop, approve and implement effective policies, procedures and regulations in the management of the BBA programme.

5.2   UCB has clearly identified the roles and responsibilities of various positions at the College some which are the University Council, the President, Board of Trustees, Head of Department, academic staff, the registrar. The Panel is concerned that the long list of responsibilities of the Head of Department could prevent him from exercising an effective leadership. Moreover, some of the duties assigned, such as reviewing course files, managing student academic discipline, reviewing test questions of major examinations, are not appropriate for a Head of Department and could be carried out by the committees. The Head of Department chairs the Departmental Meetings, attends University Council and represents the Department. The new Head of Department was appointed only four months ago. According to the SER and the submitted minutes of meeting, UCB has six standing committees; Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee, Curriculum Development Committee, Examination Committee, Academic Research Committee, Planning Committee, and Student Affairs Committee. A brief description of the role of each committee were provided, however, there is no evidence of formal terms of reference that set their internal policies, mandates and guidelines. Although the UCB has an Academic Planning Framework, the Department did not have a strategic plan prepared through a process which would embrace a vision and mission statement, goals and indicators, an action plan and the financial requirements. The Panel recommends that UCB reviews its bylaws and regulations to clarify the duties and

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responsibilities of the administrative positions, councils and committees for effective decision-making and management of the institution.

5.3   The Panel was provided with an "Academic Quality Manual" during the site visit and a "Know Your Quality System" Handbook as extra evidence, where some quality management issues with regard to the administration of UCB and the programmes were explained. Furthermore, UCB has a Programme Quality Review Procedures, Programme External Examination Policy, and Benchmarking Policy documents attached to the SER. Nevertheless, the Panel found no evidence that the main structures of the quality assurance management system are in place. There is no evidence of an annual review of the programmes, any formal benchmarking and external moderation of the examinations. The Panel recommends that UCB establish an effective quality assurance management system in order to monitor and evaluate the BBA programme periodically.

5.4   The Panel learned from interviews and documentation that the academics and the support staff are communicated their roles and responsibilities towards the administrative issues, students and programmes in the Academic Quality Manual, and "Know Your Quality System" Handbook. Furthermore, some faculty members attended various seminars, workshops and training sessions organized by the DHR/QQA and international organizations on various aspects of quality assurance in teaching and learning. The faculty members prepared their course specifications, and main parts of the programme specification. However, these documents have not been monitored, or assessed to produce any implementation in the development of courses or the programme. In spite of this, the Panel found from interviews that academic and administrative staff are aware of the key requirements of the quality assurance programme.

5.5   The Panel noted that UCB has yet to apply a new formal policy and procedures for developing and approving new programmes. Senior management is aware of the importance of a needs analysis, feasibility study and external stakeholder's views in establishing the programme goals, mission, learning outcomes and the curriculum. There is not a wider interpretation of the concept of benchmarking and the reflection of a level of confidence in UCB's own academics to pioneer new programmes with the co-operation of academics in neighbouring and international universities. Rather there is a system of piecemeal borrowing of programmes. The Panel recommends UCB develop, approve and implement formal policies and procedures for the development of new programmes to ensure that they are relevant and fit for purpose.

5.6   With regard to internal programme evaluation, the Panel confirmed that currently the faculty members are meeting to go over their course contents, identify the

unnecessary overlaps and adjust their course contents accordingly. However, the Panel has not seen any formal evaluation of the programmes, course specifications, teaching and assessment methods, programme and course learning outcomes and their mappings. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement formal mechanisms for annual internal programme evaluation and implementation of recommendations for improvement.

5.7   During the site visit the Panel learned that UCB organizes "career day" annually and invites a number of prominent companies and managers from various professions to visit and address faculty members. UCB staff at these events informally consider the views of the employers. However, so far they have not carried out a formal annual review of their programmes and have not used an internal and external feedback for initiating improvements. The procedure on how stakeholder involvement in the review of programmes and courses is reflected in documentations. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement formal processes that incorporate the internal and external stakeholders' views in the annual programme reviews.

5.8   UCB very recently prepared questionnaires to give to its alumni and the employers in order to gauge their views with regard to the effectiveness of the BBA programme and the labour market needs. Furthermore, the Panel found during the site visit that UCB requests the views of students at the end of each semester for every course through "course evaluations". However, so far there is no evidence of such information being used in either course or programme development. There are no formal mechanisms through which surveys are designed, implemented, analysed, and its outcomes being used in programme improvements. The Panel recommends that UCB conduct student, alumni and employers' surveys, analyse and develop formal mechanisms for feedback from internal and external stakeholders and ensure that their results are used for programme improvements.

5.9   During interviews the Panel was informed that currently UCB is in the process of preparing a Research Policy document to encourage faculty members to attend workshops, seminars and conferences in their research fields and supports them to publish in international journals and reviewed conference proceedings. The Panel is of the view that whilst incentives are a useful mechanism for encouraging staff to participate in research and publication, junior academics need to be mentored in writing research publications by senior academics in the early stages of their careers. The Panel encourages the College to promote joint publication, and collaborative research to establish the confidence required to break into both research and publishing results.

5.10   During the interviews the Panel was informed that the training needs of faculty members are informally evaluated and accordingly faculty development workshops

are planned for the coming semesters. Some faculty members attended workshops and training programmes on quality assurance in teaching and learning organized by the DHR, but there is no evidence that such knowledge and skills earned at such training is being shared with the faculty members. Furthermore, the Panel did not find any evidence of formal needs of the assessment policies, procedures and implementations for the professional development of all their staff. The Panel recommends that UCB establish a mechanism to identify the professional development needs of all staff and to design, implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a continuing professional development programme.

5.11   The Panel learned that informal labour market scoping is carried out by collecting information from alumni and employers during the annual alumni receptions and career day. The Department also provided some secondary information compiled from official documents. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that the submitted document needs a lot of improvements in all respect to be used in scoping the labour market and providing guidance for the updating of the programmes. The Panel could not find any evidence of a formal, structured, continuous scoping of the labour market to provide an input in updating programmes. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement a formal mechanism to analyse the labour market needs and incorporate it into the programme improvement process.

5.12   The Panel identified the establishment of an External Advisory Board (EAB) in 2013 which has met twice. The EAB members are different than PAB members such that there are only external senior executives from different organizations in the EAB. The Panel is of the view that the EAB could be used to provide more information about the labour market needs and thus contribute to the relevance of the BBA programme at UCB. The Panel encourages UCB to develop and formalize the role of the EAB for scoping the market needs.

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

- The academic and administrative staff are aware of the key requirements of the quality assurance system.
- A number of useful arrangements are in process to invite experts to train the faculty members on various aspects of quality assurance in teaching and learning.
- An External Advisory Board has been established to advise faculty members of recent developments in the world of business.

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

- develop, approve and implement effective policies, procedures and regulations in the management of the BBA programme

- review and revise its bylaws and regulations to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the administrative positions, councils and committees for an effective decision making and management of UCB
- establish an effective and formal quality assurance management system in order to monitor and evaluate the programmes periodically
- develop, approve and implement formal policies and procedures for the development of new programmes to ensure that they are relevant and fit for the purpose
- develop and implement formal mechanisms for annual internal programme evaluation and implementation of recommendations for improvement
- develop and implement formal processes that incorporates the internal and external stakeholders' views in the annual programme review
- conduct student, alumni and employers surveys, analyse and develop formal mechanisms for feedbacks from internal and external stakeholders and ensure that their results are used for programme improvements
- establish a mechanism to identify the professional development needs of all staff and to design, implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a continuing professional development programme.

5.15 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** 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 limited confidence in the Bachelor of Business Administration offered by the University College of Bahrain.