Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor of Accounting and Financial Systems

College of Administrative & Financial Sciences

Gulf University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 8-10 December 2014

HC059-C2-R059

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Acronyms

ARADO	Arab Administration Development Organisation
ARMS	Academic Record Management System
BAFS	Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPA	Grade Point Average
GU	Gulf University
HEC	The Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QQA	The National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report

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1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

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

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

Indicator 4: **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**
The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Gulf University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The site visit took place on 8-10 December 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the College; these are Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems ; Bachelor of Business Administration; Bachelor of Human Resource Management and Bachelor of Communication & Public Relations.

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

GU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 12 May 2014 that the programmes offered by the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review with the site visit taking place in December 2014. In preparation for the review, GU conducted a self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date of 24 July 2014.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Financial Systems programme and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised five 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 the GU will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its Bachelor of Accounting and Finance Programme. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of GU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, GU is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to GU 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 members in the Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems programme and the interviewed staff members of the institution.

1.3 Overview of the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences

The College of Administrative & Financial Sciences was established in 2003 with the aim of preparing competitive manpower to lead organisations in both public and private sectors in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Currently, the College comprises three departments. These are the Department of Administrative Sciences, Department of Accounting and Financial Systems and Department of Communication and Public Relations. The College offers four bachelor degree programmes; namely: Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems; Bachelor of Business Administration; Bachelor of Human Resource Management and Bachelor of Communication & Public Relations. The College employs 15 full-time faculty members and four part-time faculty members. The total number of students registered in the College programmes at the time of the site visit was 131 students.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems Programme

The Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems (BAFS) programme was offered first by the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences in GU started in the academic year 2002-2003. The programme seeks to cover both the academic and professional aspects of the accounting profession in a way that interacts with the workplace of the graduates of the programme. Although the programme is available in English and Arabic, it is offered currently in Arabic only. The HEC suspended the enrolment in the programme in the academic year 2009-2010 and then it was reopened in the second

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semester of the academic year 2010-2011. However, the programme was suspended again in the academic year 2011-2012 but was reopened for the second time in the academic year 2012-2013 and is still on offer until the date of this review. The total number of students registered in the programme at the time of the site visit was 31 students. The Department of Accounting & Financial Systems has four faculty members who are fully involved in the delivery of the programme, in addition to 18 faculty member who devote 20% of their time to the delivery of the BAFS programme.

1.5   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Financial Sciences programme

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

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2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

2.1 The College of Administrative & Financial Sciences has a mission statement that is linked to the university mission statement, which is translated into a department mission statement. The department mission is also linked to the college's mission. The programme has a clear academic planning framework with clear objectives demonstrating the overall purpose of the BAFS programme. The programme objectives are linked to the university and college missions and strategic goals. The university mission statement emphasises the development of an environment that fosters contentious growth, analytical thinking, and encourages research and life-long learning to contribute to and serve the community. During the site visit, it was clear that the faculty members are aware of the programme and department objectives as well as the college and university missions. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims are clear and appropriate and are aligned to the department and college missions.

2.2 The BAFS programme comprises 130 credit hours distributed over eight semesters with 118 credits for the compulsory courses and 12 credits for the elective courses. The Panel found that these courses cover the general areas of a bachelor programme in accounting and finance. However, the Panel is of the view that the programme may benefit from introducing a course on strategic management, which is an important subject in management and administration specialisations. The Panel notes that the students' study load is appropriate where the minimum credit hours a student has to register is 12 credits and the maximum number is 19 credits in each semester. Moreover, academic advisors guide the students on their study load to ensure their suitability. The Panel notes that the student study load is comparable to that found in similar programmes. The Panel also found that the programme management has reviewed the curriculum and credit hours allocated to each course and this has led to improvements in the number of hours, and the subjects included in the programme and the intended objectives. The programme structure was also subject to review. This resulted in merging some courses such as merging 'Microeconomics1' with 'Microeconomics2' into one 'Microeconomics' course; 'Macroeconomics1' and 'Macroeconomics2' into one 'Macroeconomics' course; 'Financial Reports1&2' into one 'Financial Reports' course; and 'Financial Management1&2' into one 'Financial Management' course. Moreover, new courses were introduced such as 'Accounting Theory', 'International Accounting', 'International Finance', 'Islamic Accounting', 'Money and Finance' and 'graduation project' course, within the scope of the review of the courses and the programme structure improvement. During the site visit, the Panel met the department administration and faculty members who provided clear explanation of the listed improvements and the reasons behind these. This was also confirmed through interviews with the students and alumni. It also became clear during the site visit that one of the primary conditions to ensure that students' progress adequately from one level to another is through the progression embedded within the structure of the courses and the prerequisites required for the courses, which are generally appropriate. This allows for smooth progression from one level to

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another and an accumulation of knowledge and skills that students acquire. Interviews with faculty members and students during the site visit confirmed that they are satisfied with the curriculum and study load. The Panel appreciates that the programme covers, in general, the theoretical and practical knowledge, subject specific skills and general skills, and provides logical progression of courses over the years of study.

2.3   The courses and their contents are documented by the faculty members in specific course files prepared for this purpose. In addition, there is a course specification for each course, which includes the course objectives, outcomes and assessment methods. The Panel also found evidence of a committee formed by the Department to review the programme and ensure that the programme content meets the norms and standards related to the specialisation. Moreover, the committee revises the appropriateness of the syllabus for the degree in terms of the depth and breadth of the courses, their relevant to the specialisation and the inclusion of current and latest professional practices and published research findings. The Panel examined the course specifications and course files for the two academic years 2012-2014, and found that these are aligned, generally, with the programme requirements in terms of depth and variety. However, the Panel notes that the course specification is prepared using a predesigned template that may reduce the flexibility the faculty member teaching the course has in introducing amendments needed to the course content and its delivery. Therefore, the Panel suggests that faculty members are given some freedom to update the course content in accordance with the latest developments in the field of specialisation. The Panel also notes the need to give more attention to the practical aspects of the syllabus, especially in the advance courses. The Panel recommends that the College review the content of the advanced and specialisation courses to enhance the practical aspect of these courses.

2.4   The programme has Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that include knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, thinking skills and other skills, and these are documented in the programme specification. The SER also states that there is a periodic review process for the Programme ILOs (PILOs). On reviewing the programme files for the academic year 2012-2013 and comparing these with other files from the academic year 2013-2014 made available during the site visit, the Panel confirmed that the review took place and actions were taken based on the outcomes of the review. The Panel also examined the PILOs and found, with appreciation, that these are appropriate to the programme aims, comparable with similar programmes, and meet the standards adopted in this field.

2.5   The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) for each course are documented in the course specification. These CILOs are mapped to the PILOs using the skills map of the study plan. The Panel also studied the CILOs and noted that most of these outcomes are appropriate, and aligned to the level of the course and its content. However, the CILOs of a few courses need to be reviewed; for example, the outcome 'B-5' in the 'International Accounting' course stipulates enabling students to prepare financial statements, whereas what the students actually do, according to the course specification, is to analyse these statements, which does not include their preparation.

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The Panel also notes that the CILOs of the English course for Business Administration (ENG216) are limited to two categories: 'thinking skills' and 'other skills'. The Panel recommends that the College review the ILOs of all courses to ensure that these are aligned with the course content.

2.6 The BAFS programme includes a practical training course consisting of three credit hours, which provides students with the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in a practical context related to their specialisation. Students can register after completing 60% of the total number of the programme credit hours. Students are required to complete 200 actual training hours and their performance is assessed by both the industrial supervisor and the academic supervisor. However, the role of the academic supervisor, as indicted in the internship guidelines, is limited to assessing the final report submitted by the student. Moreover, the internship policy does not explicitly stipulate practical supervision other than maintaining a relation between the student and his academic supervisor as stated in the 'Guidelines for Trainee Students', annexed to the internship policy. The policy does not indicate that the academic advisor should visit students during the training period or establish direct communication with the industrial supervisor. In addition, the Panel did not find a comprehensive description of the practical training course that includes clear learning outcomes and how to assess these. The Panel recommends that the College develop a comprehensive specification for the practical training course, which specifies the CILOs and the assessment methods used to evaluate the student's achievement of these ILOs during the training period.

2.7 The Teaching Manual includes the university's teaching and learning policies and the intended goals for the period 2011-2015, which indicate the use of a variety of teaching and learning methods. On examining the course files, the Panel noted, with appreciation, that course specifications, in general, include a number of teaching and learning methods that vary from one course to another depending on the nature of the course, its level and the CILOs. This was confirmed during interviews with the programme current students and graduates. The Panel also learned that students are assigned group and individual tasks and practical applications to ensure the achievement of the programme ILOs. The SER and the interviews with the faculty members emphasised encouraging students' self-study, where e-learning is used as a tool to enhance education provision in the institution through the utilisation of the 'Moodle' system. However, the Panel is of the view that this needs further support to enhance the teaching and learning process more effectively.

2.8 There are formal assessment policy and procedures in place for evaluating students' achievement by faculty members, include grading criteria, to ensure fairness. The assessment policy stipulates providing students with immediate feedback on their performance in the mid-semester examination. The Panel, during interviews with faculty members and students and by reviewing course files and examination papers, confirmed that feedback is available on most of students' work, with a few exceptions that should be avoided. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to ensure that written feedback is provided on all students' work, particularly their research projects. Mid-semester and final examinations are managed by GU's Central Committee using

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mechanisms that ensure fairness; such as 'blind marking'. These procedures are presented in the Teaching Manual, and there is an appeal mechanism in place. During interviews with students, it became evident that they are aware of the procedures related to this mechanism. On the other hand, the Panel came to know during interviews with faculty members that course instructors check on students' understanding of submitted research contents, and use special software to ensure that submitted students' researches are free from plagiarism. The Panel appreciates that there are clear assessment policies and procedures that are known by faculty members and students. However, the Panel notes that all courses follow the same marks distribution scale allocating 10% of the total mark for class participation, 10% for assignments, 10% for quizzes, and 30% for the mid-semester examination and 40% for the final examination. The Panel is of the view that in majority of academic programmes, there is some freedom for the faculty member with regard to marks distribution within the scope of the programme objectives. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College revise the marks distribution according to the course type and its ILOs while considering more freedom to the faculty member with regard to students' evaluation.

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

- The programme has clear and appropriate aims that are in line with the department and college mission statements.
- The programme, in general, covers the theoretical and practical knowledge, subject specific skills and general skills, and provides logical progression of courses over the years of study.
- Programme intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the Programme aims, comparable with similar programmes, and meet the standards adopted in this field.
- A range of versified teaching methods is used, which is suitable for the type and level of course being delivered.
- There are clear assessment policies and procedures, which are known to both faculty members and students.

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

- revise the contents of the higher and specialised courses to enrich the practical aspects of these courses
- review the intended learning outcomes of all courses to ensure that these are aligned with the course contents
- develop a comprehensive course specification for the practical training course, which specifies the course intended learning outcomes and the assessment methods used to evaluate the student's achievement of these intended learning outcomes during the training period
- revise the current marks distribution among different types of assessment to ensure alignment with the type and level of the course and its intended learning outcomes.

2.11 **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   Admission to the BAFS programme is governed by GU's overarching admission
policy. The admission score required for all GU undergraduate programmes was
lowered from 70% to 60% for secondary school graduates. Applicants with less than
60% secondary school score are also admitted, but only after they pass the orientation
programme successfully. The programme management explained that this decision
was made to attract new students and avoid the decrease in enrolment due to the
programme suspension during the period 2009-2011. Although the admission criteria
is in line with the HEC requirements, the Panel notes that the admission policy is open
in the sense of admitting any applicant, either directly to the BAFS programme or
through the orientation programme, which contradicts the college's objective of
attracting distinguished students. The Panel recommends that the College review its
admission policy in accordance with the college and department's objectives and
ensure that the admission criteria are appropriate for the programme needs and
requirements.

3.2   The admission records submitted with the additional evidence martials reveal that the
high school score of the admitted students range between lower scores in the 50s and
a few scores higher than 80. The number of students admitted in the programme in
the second semester of the academic year 2012-2013 was 47 student, most of whom are
form the GCC countries. Transcripts of students admitted in the orientation
programme reveals that admitted students with secondary school scores less than 60%
are usually unable to improve their level, as they continue being at risk of academic
falier for a long period. In addition, the placement test analysis that was conducted at
the college level in May 2015 indicates that students who scored less than 65% in the
computer placement test, and consequently had to study the orientation course
'GCIS5011' lag behind their colleagues who were not required to study this course,
with great variation (63% *vs.* 37%). The results of Mathematics and English, however,
differ as students of both categories perform equally in mathematics, whereas those
who studied English in the orientation programme perform better than their
colleagues who entered the programme directly. This raises a question regarding the
level of English language for those who are admitted directly in the programme. The
Panel is of the view that even if the admission requirements are clear, there is a need
to revise the criteria that allow a student to proceed from the orientation stage to the
BAFS programme. The Panel recommends that the College revise the minimum score
requirement for the English language in the admission requirements and the content
of the orientation programme to ensure that its outcomes qualify students to join the
programme at a level appropriate to the needs of the programme.

3.3   The SER refers to clear lines of responsibility and accountability regarding the
management of the programme. The decision-making process starts from the
Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally reaches the University
Council for approval. The Head of Department (HoD), in cooperation with the

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programme coordinator, is the person in-charge of the programme management, whereas the Dean is responsible for following up the HoDs performance to ensure the effectiveness of the educational process in the College. During the site visit, it was evident that the hierarchy and lines of responsibilities are followed by the Department, with some flexibility due to the small size of the institution. This is confirmed by the reports, minutes of meetings, and decision-making processes. This hierarchy and the small size of the institution have contributed to the smooth run of the management process, especially with a large number of the academic staff having administrative and academic responsibilities at the same time, enabling them to understand the procedures. The Panel appreciates the organisational structure adopted in managing the College and the programmes as well as the evaluation and accountability systems followed.

3.4   Overall, the faculty members' qualifications and expertise are appropriate to the programme aims and its delivery. The Panel confirmed the level of these qualifications by reviewing the CVs of all faculty members delivering the programme and found them appropriate for the requirements of the programme. In terms of number, and considering the decrease in the number of students enrolled in the programme, the number of faculty members is sufficient compared to that of students. There are 22 faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme, with four faculty members fully dedicated to the programme while the others allocate about 20% of their time to it. Noting that some faculty members participate in teaching other programmes, the Panel is of the view that their number is appropriate to the programme needs. Nonetheless, on examining the teaching load of the staff, the Panel noted that the majority of staff members have a teaching load that is very close to the maximum load prescribed by the HEC (5 courses). This is because students are distributed into teaching sessions throughout the weekdays, with some of them attending in the morning; others in the afternoon and a third group are weekend students. This, in addition to other administrative responsibilities assigned to faculty members such as committee activities at the college and university level, would consequently leave little time for them to engage in research and professional self-development activities. Although the College supports research by providing grants for those who publish their work in refereed journals, the research outcome is still modest and limited to a small number of the faculty members. The Panel recommends that the College rationalise the teaching load of its teaching staff and provide more time for them to engage in research and professional self-development activities.

3.5   The SER indicates that the University has clear recruitment procedures that are implemented. The HoD, Dean and university President discuss and decide on hiring new faculty members based on a recommendation made by a committee composed of the HoD, Dean and a faculty member in the Department. Vacancies are also advertised on the university website. In its search for new faculty members, the University also considers personal recommendations from those who know some applicants, leaving advertisements aside. The Panel advises the College to circulate its academic posts vacancies more widely such as in specialised journals to ensure more transparency and attract a variety of distinguished and qualified staff. The Panel members had the opportunity to examine documents related to applicants' evaluation and the attached

recommendation reports on their appointment. The Panel is satisfied that there are clear recruitment procedures, which are regularly implemented. Faculty members' performance is evaluated by the HoD and students, who provide their feedback on the quality of teaching through the 'Course Evaluation Form'. From the site visit interviews and evidence provided, the Panel confirmed that these procedures are understood by all concerned parties and they are in place. The Panel also studied the faculty retention rates in relation to the number of students, and notes that these are appropriate to the status of the programme. The Panel appreciates that there are clear procedures for faculty members' recruitment and appraisal, which are clearly and systematically implemented. In addition, there is a stipulated promotion policy for faculty members, which includes a set of criteria including research and community service, in addition to teaching and learning activities. This policy was developed based on the promotion policy of a local university. However, the policy was not in effect up to the date of this site visit, and the Panel encourages the College to implement it.

3.6   GU has developed an in-house system, the Academic Record Management System (ARMS), to manage its academic profile and data, which was demonstrated to the Panel during the site visit. The ARMS system includes all basic practical and educational student data that makes it possible to generate various kinds of reports to inform administrative activities and decision-making. In addition, the system includes all data and information that faculty members or the administration may need; for example, the academic advisor can get an 'overview' about a student's progress, which enriches the academic advising process. The Panel note that the ARMS system does not include the financial system of the University, as is the case in most of the comprehensive systems. However, the Panel was assured by concerned staff members that a mechanism is in place, to allow transferring data across both systems. The Panel appreciates the ARAMS system that has the provision to provide reports needed by the University to improve management and inform the decision-mailing process.

3.7   There are clear mechanisms to ensure the security and safety of students' records and information for which the University was awarded ISO270001 certificate. Moreover, there are procedures in place for conducting the examinations, recording and changing grades, confirming the academic status of the students and ensuring that graduate requirements are fulfilled, which give confidence to the results' integrity and reliability. This was confirmed by the campus tour and the panel's interviews with the relevant university staff, faculty members and students. The Panel appreciates that there are clear procedures in place to ensure the safety and security of information and the reliability and accuracy of the results.

3.8   The SER states that there are adequate facilities and a sufficient number of laboratories, which are available for students. The Panel toured the university facilities and noted that these are, in general, adequate for the programme needs and for the number of registered students. These facilities include computer laboratories and the library. The Panel visited the university library and noted the limited variety of learning resources for some subjects, as the majority of these are course textbooks. The Panel also noted the lack of references commonly recommended for some advanced Accounting

courses, such as ACC480, which were not available. The Panel advises the College to ensure that at least one copy of these books is always available in the library. With regard to e-resources, there are three databases available; namely the Arab Administration Development Organisation (ARADO) which includes a limited number of resources on management and administration, especially those related to civil service in the public sector in the Arab world; 'Barcelona' database which includes many resources in academic fields such as accounting and finance; and 'Springer' database which provides many resources including business administration books and journals. The Panel acknowledges that these resources are adequate to meet the basic requirements of the programme and encourages the College to expand the acquisition of learning resources and references relevant to the programme.

3.9   During interview sessions with faculty members, students and IT management staff, and on reviewing the supporting evidence, the Panel noted that the e-learning system 'Moodle' is used to track the use of some e-learning resources available in the University. However, neither the SER nor the senior management interviewed during the site visit referred to any comprehensive system available to track the usage of resources and other teaching and learning facilities the University provides for students and faculty members. The Panel recommends that the College establish a comprehensive system to track the use of all educational facilities and resources in order to evaluate their utilisation.

3.10   GU provides a number of various student support procedures and services. Each student is assigned an academic advisor who provides continuous and necessary assistance immediately after the students are admitted to the programme. The university staff members also provide assistance and support to students with regard to the library, e-resources and laboratories. The e-learning Department organises training sessions for students on the use of 'Moodle'. There is also a medical clinic on campus, which provides first aid services to students and staff members. The students interviewed during the site visit valued the level of support and care the University provides to them. The Panel appreciates that there are mechanisms in place that provide appropriate support for students.

3.11   The SER refers to the attention given to new students by the University where orientation sessions are organised, by the Admission and Registration and the Student Affairs Deanships, to inform new students about the university facilities and bylaws. During these sessions, new students are provided with copies of the Student Handbook and Academic Advising Manual. In addition, the President and the college Dean meet new students and respond to their questions. The students interviewed during the site visit confirmed that they receive appropriate induction and guidance and they are provided with what they need to familiarise themselves with university life. This was also evident in the procedures followed to guide newly admitted students, which are stated in the university Procedures Manual, and their actual implementation was confirmed. These induction sessions cover transferred students also, as was confirmed by the Panel through the interviews conducted during the site visit. The Panel appreciates the arrangements the University has put in place to guide newly admitted and transferred students, which are implemented effectively.

3.12 The SER refers to the attention and care provided for 'at-risk' students, which was also confirmed by relevant university staff. These students are identified at an early stage by the Guidance and Advising Centre and by monitoring their academic progress. Moreover, due to the limited number of students, the majority of faculty members are aware of those cases that need support. The Panel examined the mechanisms used in this respect as well as the academic performance of those students identified to be at risk of academic failure. The Panel notes that, although the academic advising system exists along with clear procedures, a number of students admitted with secondary school score less than 60% remain at risk of academic failure for more than two semesters, as was evident from their transcripts. This was also confirmed by the ARMS system, where the 'at-risk' students report, which is one of the reports generated by this system, reveals that almost the same students are listed in these reports for a number of semesters. This indicates that the currently adopted mechanisms are not effective and are inconsistent with the general policies of the University. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College provide effective support for 'at-risk' students without contradicting the bylaws that do not allow them to continue in the programme longer than the periods stipulated in the university's policies.

3.13 The SER states that there is a conducive learning environment that leads to expanding the student experience and knowledge through informal learning. The SER indicates that students enrolled in the programme participate in visits to large companies in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Practical Product Day organised by the University. However, the reduction in the number of students in the University has generally affected the overall educational atmosphere in the institution where student activities started to decrease. During the site visit, the Panel did not sense that there is a flourishing university life and did not find evidence on various student activities and even some of the wall announcements were very old (more than two years old). During interviews with students, the Panel came to know that student clubs are suspended and activities are not scheduled, with the exception of some activities such as the football team participation in championship match organised by another private university. The Panel encourages the College to consider other ways for creating a supportive environment for informal learning, considering the small number of students.

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

- There is an administration system in place to run the College and the programme along with evaluation and accountably procedures.
- There are clear procedures for faculty members' recruitment and appraisal, which includes students' feedback, and these procedures are implanted clearly and systematically.
- There is a well-designed information management system (ARMS), which includes the reports the University needs to improve management and inform the decision making process.
- There are clear procedures to ensure the security and safety of information and the accuracy of the generated results.

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- There is appropriate support provided to students with regard to their academic and social needs.
- There are arrangements in place to guide and advise newly admitted and transferred students, and these arrangements are effectively implemented.

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

- review the admission policy to be in line with the college's objectives, and ensure that admission criteria are appropriate to the requirements of the programme
- review the minimum score required for the English language admission test and the content of orientation courses to ensure that their outcomes enhance the enrolled students' level and enable them to meet the requirements of the programme
- rationalise the faculty members' teaching load to provide more time for them to engage in research and self-development
- Introduce a comprehensive system to track the usage of all university educational resources and facilities to evaluate their utilisation
- provide necessary support needed for 'at-risk' students without contradicting the bylaws that do not allow these students to continue in this status for long periods.

3.16 **Judgement**

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

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4 Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

4.1 The SER states that the academic standards of GU ensure producing a graduate of distinguished type. However, the SER supporting appendices do not include a clear description of the graduates' attributes. The Panel advises the College to identify the indented graduates' attributes. The SER stats that the programme intends to produce graduates who are capable of acquiring the programme ILOs including knowledge and understanding, programme specialised skills, thinking skills and other skills which are acquired and assessed through the programme courses. According to the SER, course objectives directly contribute to the aims of the programme which are stated in a way that specifies the career stream and professional achievement the programme seeks to realise through its graduates. The Panel notes that the skills map and teaching and learning tools generally enable students to acquire the basic intended skills of the programme.

4.2 GU has a benchmarking policy that clearly stipulates the scope of benchmarking, the institutions with which GU intends to benchmark itself with, the procedures to be followed, the supporting documents and the reporting outlines. The policy encourages that benchmarking is conducted in collaboration with the institutions against which the benchmarking activity will be carried out. In case of difficulties, however, the policy allows for conducting informal benchmarking using the information available on the internet. The Panel recommends conducting formal benchmarking processes. The programme was benchmarked informally; using information accessed through the internet, against other programmes in a number of universities such as Ahlia University at the local level, Middlesex-Dubai at the regional level, and Islamic University in Malaysia at the international level. In this regard, the College and the Department made some amendments to courses based on the outcome of these benchmarking activities, particularly those made at the college level and decreasing the total number of courses required for graduation. The compulsory courses of the programme were also reviewed, and some courses were merged to reduce duplication in these courses such as Economics, and Financial Reports, and new courses were added such Accounting Theory, Money and Banks, and the graduation project course. This is a positive step towards the implementation of a benchmarking policy. However, the Panel notes the narrow scope of these benchmarking activities, which include the programme structure, study plan and the components of the programme and its courses only. The exercise did not include teaching and learning methods, teaching resources and references, the assessment methods and their linkage to the ILOs. In addition, the benchmarking process ignored reference to student admission and support although both aspects are stated in the university's benchmarking policy. Moreover, during interviews, the Panel confirmed that course files are not subject to benchmarking. The Panel recommends that the benchmarking processes be conducted in accordance with the university policy, and not be restricted to the programme structure and the study plan.

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4.3   GU has clear assessment policy and procedures as stated in the Faculty Members Manual. GU Examination Committee is responsible for the control and implementation of the examination process. The Committee has constructed detailed examinations instructions for the academic year 2010-2011 based on the assessment policy and procedures, and these instructions are still in effect. They include examination halls, grading and setting examination questions, and other organisational aspects. It was confirmed also that these procedures are put in place, specifically with regard to the operation mechanisms. Moreover, the SER states that marks distribution in each course is communicated to students, and this was confirmed during the site visit interviews. End of course students' feedback survey includes a question on the fairness of assessment, and the outcomes of the conducted surveys indicate students' satisfaction with the examinations policies and procedures. During the site visit, the Panel came to know that the Department and College Councils review the marks of all courses of the programme before their approval, which was verified during the interview sessions and through the minutes of meetings of the Department and College Councils. The Panel appreciates that there are clear assessment procedures, which are implemented and students' satisfaction is measured with regards to the assessment policy. Moreover, the SER indicates that assessment policies are subject to regular reviews; for example, the College approved the amendment in assessment methods by eliminating the 5% allocated for attendance and including it within class participation score. The Panel is of the view that that this a positive step to improve the assessment process. The Panel confirmed by reviewing the course files, that this amendment was implemented during the last semester. In addition and as stated under Indicator 1, there are procedures relating to students' appeals. The SER indicates that examination papers are moderated internally by an internal moderator and the HoD, and assessment methods are reviewed to ensure their alignment with the ILOs. Moreover, marks distribution is well known by students and presented in the Academic Advising Manual. The Panel notes that the assessment methods and the weight of each assessment are included in the specifications of most courses. However, on reviewing some course files, it was found that marks description is not included in a few course specifications. The Panel is of the view that this has to be an integral part of information provided in the course specifications of each course.

4.4   Assessment tools are linked to the ILOs listed in the programme specification, and this linkage is checked through the internal moderation process and by the Quality Assurance Centre. The SER indicates that examination papers is evaluated by the internal moderator and the HoD, where the assessment process itself and to what extent it is appropriate for the ILOs is checked. The Quality Assurance Centre also reviews course files to ensure assessment alignment with the stated CILOs and issues reports on this. In order to improve the outcome of the assessment process, the external moderation policy was introduced effective from the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015. The Panel reviewed the provided course files and noted that these include examination checklists and maps linking the CILOs with the assessment tools used such as written examinations, projects and assignments. The Panel noted that the assessment tools are generally appropriate for the ILOs, however, the Panel observed inconsistency between some assessment tools and the ILOs to be assessed. The Panel

is of the view that the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to assess the alignment of the assessment tools to the ILOs needs to be evaluated.

4.5   GU has an internal moderation policy that stipulates assigning an internal moderator for each course. Before the date of the examination, the internal moderator evaluates the alignment of the examination questions with the course specification and the CILOs and the compliance with the assessment tools in terms of the quality of questions, their design and clarity, marks distribution and ability to assess various levels of students. The moderator submits his feedback in a form especially designed for this purpose and the course instructor is required to implement the required changes on the examination paper, which is approved by the HoD. The Panel noted that the internal moderation procedure was restricted to pre-examination moderation, i.e. the examination content, and did not include post-examination moderation, i.e. students' graded responses. This is because the moderation policy was implemented only at the beginning of this semester. The Panel examined the provided course files and confirmed that these include the internal moderators' forms. The Panel noted, however, that all the provided forms indicate that assessment conditions are met and that examination questions are aligned with the ILOs in all cases. The Panel enquired about this matter during interview sessions and was informed that the course files include the final checklist, and some amendments are made before reaching the final version of the examination, yet these amendments are not recorded. The Panel is of the view that it is important to record all amendments and changes made based on the internal moderation process; otherwise, it would be just a formality as it is now. The Panel recommends that the College document the changes made based on the internal moderation, and evaluate the effectiveness of the internal moderation process applied by the programme.

4.6   According to the external moderation policy, the external examiner of the programme reviews, evaluates and verifies the student assessment processes, and then submits his report after reviewing a set of questions papers provided by the course instructor to ensure the integrity of the examinations and marking process. However, this policy was not put in place until the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, i.e. during the semester in which the site visit to the institution took place. Consequently, the Panel was not able to determine the effectiveness of the implementation. Although no formal policy for external moderation existed before the academic year 2014-2015, the College used external examiners for the programme to make sure that examinations are robust in addition to evaluating other aspects of the programme such as the programme structure and content, as well as teaching and learning methods. The Panel encourages the College to continue applying the external moderation policy adopted by the University and evaluate the effectiveness of this process.

4.7   Faculty members employ different assessment tools such as quizzes, mid-semester and final examinations, individual and group projects, exercises, home assignments, office tasks and class participation. This was confirmed during interviews with the faculty members, students and graduates of the programme. Moreover, the Panel reviewed a number of course files and examined samples of marked students' work such as assignment, examinations and worksheets, and found that they are, in general,

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appropriate to the level of the course and its CILOs. It was also found that the grading, in general, is consistent with the students work and what is expected in similar programmes. The Panel also found evidence that assessment tools used include assessing the analytical ability of students and their higher thinking skills and specialisation skills by presenting and discussing studies conducted by individuals or groups of students. The Panel found evidence in the course files of 'Cost Accounting' and 'Auditing' courses, which are considered advanced courses in the BAFS programme, on the use of case studies in students' work. However, the Panel notes that utilising case studies is still limited, and they need to be of more depth to cover the intended outcomes. The Panel also notes that in some cases the course map refers to an assessment method, which is not necessarily appropriate for measuring the specified outcome. For example, it was stated in one of the final examinations, which is a written paper, that it evaluates students' use of technology, which is not possible in that case. In another case, the connection between the outcome and assessment was not direct nor clear, since the outcome to be assessed was to 'prepare an overall budget' whereas the given question required 'cost calculation'. Even if it is possible to establish a link between cost calculation and budgeting, this cannot be considered as a proper method for evaluating the student's ability of budget preparation. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College expand the adoption of case studies to ensure the achievement of the programme learning outcomes, and ensure that in all courses, the assessment methods used are appropriate to the outcomes to be assessed.

4.8   The Panel reviewed the final results presented in the provided samples of course files, which revealed that marks distribution is consistent with students' achievement, and the average Grade Point Average (GPA) of the graduates of the programme, although inclined towards some mark inflation, is still within acceptable limits, and the inflation has decreased over the last years. In addition, the evaluation of BAFS programme graduates was positive in general as presented by the College in the Appendices attached to the SER. These claims were confirmed during the site visit and interviews with graduates and employers. Overall, the Panel appreciates that the level of students' achievement is consistent with the programme objectives and its ILOs. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel notes that the minimum score required to pass a course is 50%. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College, when conducting the programme benchmarking (Paragraph 4.2), revise this minimum score to be consistent with the minimum score required to pass a courses in other universities adopting similar credit hours system.

4.9   The SER indicates that the University has conducted cohort analysis for admitted students, including the percentage of admitted students compared to that of graduates who completed the programme successfully and the retention and progression rates. The data on the length of study, accumulative GPA, minimum and maximum grades, presented in the SER, are acceptable, although these tend to be on high side. In addition, the dropout percentage is considered within the low limits, with a retention rate of 92%. The Panel appreciates the high retention rate in the programme.

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4.10   The study plan of the BAFS programme includes an internship course (ACC303), which requires student to complete 200 hours of actual practical training in the field of accounting and financial systems at an organisation. Student's performance in this course is assessed by the industrial supervisor, academic advisor and a discussion committee. Student's marks are distributed as 40% by the industrial advisor, 30% by the academic supervisor and 30% by the discussion committee. The course files made available during the site visit indicate that there is an administrative follow-up and communication between the Department and the training organisation. However, a weakness was noted in this communication with regard to following up students' achievement and progress over the various stages of the training process. This was confirmed during the site visit, where interviews with students and faculty members revealed that student's follow-up during the training period might not be actual or effective, as it is often carried out by phone. The Panel recommends that the College revise the mechanism used in evaluating the internship course, and ensure real supervision of the content and the level of the practical training to ensure that trainee practice the skills they acquired during their study.

4.11   The Department of Accounting and Finance has an advisory board, which consists of faculty members and external members experienced in the field of accounting and financial systems from well-reputed institutions in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, a student representative also attends the Board meetings. The Panel reviewed the board's minutes of meetings, met with Board representatives and confirmed that the Board meets periodically and provides suggestions to the Department on how to improve the programme and address the labour market needs and trends. During their meeting with the Panel, the Board members expressed their satisfaction with the improvements the Department introduced to the programme by considering their suggestions and feedback. However, the board members informed the Panel that graduates' competencies in the English language is weak, and that action is needed at the course level, in order to improve the gradates' proficiency in English, as this is needed for the Bahraini job market. The Panel appreciates the active role the Advisory Board plays in the programme.

4.12   The College conducted a graduates and employers survey for the BAFS programme in the second semester of the academic year 2013-2014 to determine their satisfaction with the PILOs and to check whether knowledge and skills students acquire are appropriate for the work requirements. The employer's satisfaction ranged between 75% and 80% whereas graduates' satisfaction rate was on the high side (85%-100%). These findings were congruent with the views the Panel elicited in its meetings with the graduates and employers during the site visit. The employers empathised the importance of the internship programme and its integration within the study plan so that students may acquire some experience that qualifies them to join the work environment more easily. The Panel appreciates the high percentage of employers' satisfaction. However, the Panel is of the view that the College should measure graduates and employers' satisfaction towards the programme regularly and continuously (see Paragraph 5.8 of this Report).

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

- There are clear assessment mechanisms in place that are continuously reviewed, and students' feedback is taken into consideration.
- The student's retention rate is high, reaching 92%.
- The level of students' achievement, in general, is consistent with programme objectives and its intended learning outcomes.
- There is an active Advisory Board, which contributes to the programme development to meet the labour market needs.
- Graduates and employers are satisfied with the level of the programme and its graduates.

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

- conduct formal benchmarking in line with the university policy, which is not limited to the programme structure and study plan, and includes benchmarking of the minimum pass score required in the courses
- document the changes and amendments resulting from the internal moderation process, and evaluate the effectiveness of this process
- expand the adoption of case studies in students' work to ensure the achievement of the programme intended learning outcomes and that the assessment methods used are appropriate to the learning outcome they intend to assess
- revise the implementing mechanism of the internship course, and ensure real supervision of the content, the level of implementation and the assessment methods to ensure that training students practice the skills they acquired during their study.

4.15 **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 University has clear policies and the SER states that hard copies of these policies are circulated to the Deans, HoDs and other stakeholders, in addition to their publication on the university website. The SER also states that the Academic Advising Manual is also published and circulated to all faculty members and it is made available on the university website. The University also publishes the Student Handbook, which includes the guidelines and bylaws important for students. The Panel confirmed this information by examining the university website, the SER appendices and additional supporting evidence, as well as through interviews with the faculty members and students. The small size of the College makes it easier to disseminate these policies and procedures, and the Panel confirmed the implementation of these policies. However, the Panel notes that although there are mechanisms in place for implementing the approved bylaws and policies, these mechanisms sometimes lack accuracy and consistency; for example, there is a weakness in implementing the benchmarking policy. On the other hand, many policies, some of which are related to student services and examinations, are implemented well and consistently. The Panel appreciates that necessary policies and procedures are available to manage the programme, are known to academic and administrative staff and are applied in most areas.

5.2 The SER indicates that the HoD, in cooperation with the Department Council and the department's committees, manages the implementation of the programme both academically and administratively. During the interviews with faculty members and students, it became evident to the Panel that the programme is managed in a clear manner and that the programme team are responsible and the administrative hierarchy is clear. The Quality Assurance Centre ensures and reports periodically on the effectiveness of the department management. From the minutes of meetings of the Department Council and evidence of the HoD's and Dean's follow-up on the actions suggested by the Quality Assurance Centre at all academic and administrative levels, it became evident that these arrangements are in place within the scope and limits of the responsibility of each relevant entity. The Panel appreciates that there is an effective and responsible leadership for the programme.

5.3 The University has a Quality Assurance Manual, which was published in the academic year 2012-2013 and was re-published in the academic year 2013-2014. The Manual includes the Strategic Plan of the Quality Assurance Centre, programme reviews activities, and all appendices required for implementing the quality assurance procedures in the University. Moreover, the Quality Assurance Centre prepares an annual operation plan, which is circulated to the Deans. During the site visit, the coordination between this Centre and other units in the University was evident. Moreover, the SER indicates that the college's quality assurance coordinator follows

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up the implementation of the quality assurance activities, which include assuring the quality of academic programmes development, tracking the purpose of these activities, enhancing the quality culture, collecting data and information, assessing performance and documenting the implemented quality assurance procedures. This was confirmed during the site visit interviews, in addition to the reports submitted to the Quality Assurance Centre by the college coordinator. The Panel appreciates that there is a comprehensive system for quality assurance, which is subject to periodic reviews. The Quality Assurance Centre, within the scope of its remits, collects data from all participants engaged in the educational processes including faculty members, students and graduates. The Panel noted that although the quality assurance system is functional, its effectiveness is limited. This is not due to limitation in the system itself or its performance, but because of the number of participants involved at any period; the number of students, faculty members and graduates is still limited, reducing the value of the conclusions elicited from implementing the quality assurance system. The Panel also notes that the University has clear procedures with regard to quality assurance, but these are not implemented systematically. This, the Panel observed, is due to the recent implementation of some important policies, many of which were not implemented until 2014, and a few before 2013. Therefore, the Panel recommends more accuracy and consistency in implementing the quality assurance policies and procedures.

5.4   The SER indicates that the Quality Assurance Centre disseminates and explains quality assurance concepts to faculty members by various means including workshops and seminars, in addition to the university website publication. This enables browsers to get information related to the objectives of the quality assurance system and its implementation. All faculty members participate in the internal evaluation process and reports preparation. The Panel noted, during the interviews with faculty members and senior management, the wide spread of the culture of quality assurance, staff recognition of its importance and their contribution to the process. The Panel appreciates that the administrative and academic staff are well aware of the quality assurance concepts and its procedures in the College and their role in this regard.

5.5   The SER indicates that a system is followed for offering new programmes, which starts with the academic department recommendations based on the labour market needs, the Advisory Board and external examiners' recommendations, and the results of employers, students and graduates surveys. However, no new programmes have been offered yet, due to the administration status of the University. During the site visit interviews, it became evident to the Panel that faculty members are aware of these procedures. Nonetheless, the Panel advises the College to document these procedures.

5.6   The Quality Assurance Manual of the academic year 2013-2014 stipulates the programme review arrangements including procedures, templates and participating entities. The SER states that GU has been conducting annual reviews of its programmes since the academic year 2010-2011. The SER also indicates that the Department of Accounting and Finance has conducted an annual programme review that resulted in a self-evaluation report with an improvement plan, which was implemented in 2011-2012. The Quality Assurance Centre follows up the progress

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achieved in implanting the improvement plan and collects students' feedback to evaluate their satisfaction with the offered courses. In addition, the SER states that an external reviewer has reviewed the programmes in terms of structure, number of credit hours, assessment tools and students' work to ensure they are comparable with similar programmes offered by local, regional and international institutions. Finally, the SER indicates that the department Advisory Board meets once every semester for the purpose of the programme development, where feedback is presented to be utilised in the programme review. The Panel viewed the programme review report dated 25 March 2014, and noted the effective contribution of the Advisory Board in this process. The Panel encourages the College to continue implementing its annual programme review.

5.7   The SER indicates that there is a policy that stipulates that the programme should be reviewed every five years. The programmes was, in fact, reviewed based on feedback collected from internal and external sources such as faculty members, students, benchmarking findings and the Advisory Board, whose significant role in the development process was confirmed through interviewing its members. The feedback from the external examiner was also used; however, there was no systematic or effective use of employers' input in the programme development. The Panel also is of the view that benchmarking was utilised in a limited way, focusing on the number of credit hours, the programme structure and courses only. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should benefit more profoundly from the internal and external feedback when conducting periodic reviews of the programme.

5.8   The SER refers to the use of students, faculty members, graduates, and employers' views, in addition to the Advisory Board and the external examiners' recommendations to ensure the quality of provision. The SER also indicates that relevant stakeholders are informed about the outcomes of their feedback during meetings (Dean's meetings with students and Department Council, Advisory Board and College Council meetings). Moreover, students' course evaluation results are posted on the university website to be available for all relevant stakeholders. The Panel was provided with evidence on feedback collected by the College; such as students and graduates' survey outcomes and internal and external examiners' reports. The Panel also had the chance to meet members of the Advisory Board, and to talk to external examiners, where emphasis was made on utilising their feedback in the programme review, course files, and quality assurance tools. The Panel appreciates that a variety of internal and external mechanisms are used to collect feedback from relevant stakeholders and the use of its results. By contrast, the Panel notes that communication with employers is not systematic, and their input was surveyed only once. Moreover, the methods of collecting graduates' feedback need to be variant and not limited to surveys only. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College collect employers' feedback in more regular and effective ways, and versify its communication methods with the university's graduates.

5.9   The SER indicates that GU usually identifies the training needs of its academic and administrative staff by means of surveys. The SER refers to the provision of a number of professional development programmes and workshops. The faculty members of the

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College of Administrative & Financial Sciences participated in workshops organised by the Guidance and Counselling Unit in collaboration with the Quality Assurance Centre. The e-learning Unit also provides training sessions on e-learning to enhance its use as a teaching tool including website design and the utilisation of the e-library (digital), in addition to workshops on the e-learning system 'Moodle', as well as providing training on the use of smart boards. Moreover, the faculty members have participated in conferences and workshops inside and outside the Kingdom of Bahrain. The University also provides financial awards for academic publication. Faculty members expressed their satisfaction with the training and professional development opportunities provided to them. Overall, the Panel appreciates that the College identifies the training needs of its academic and administrative staff and adopts policies and procedures to enhance their professional development.

5.10   The SER indicates that the University is well informed of the labour market needs through the Advisory Board feedback, graduates and employers' surveys, and available publications. The BAFS programme has benefitted from these resources by introducing new courses such as 'Accounting Theory', 'Public Accounting' and 'Accounting Information Systems'. However, there are no detailed studies or reports on labour market needs and what changes should be made accordingly. When the Panel inquired about this aspect during the site visit interviews, the reply focused on the role of the Advisory Board, which is not sufficient. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College adopt more scientific and formal methods and mechanisms to scope the labour market needs.

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

- There are appropriate policies and procedures to manage the programme, which are available for the academic and administrative staff and students, and are implemented in most cases.
- There is an effective and responsible leadership for the management of the programme.
- There is a comprehensive and integrated quality assurance system stipulated in the Quality Assurance Manual, and it is subject to regular reviews.
- Academic and administrative staff are aware of the quality assurance concepts and procedures in the College and their role in implementing them.
- There are various internal and external mechanisms to collect feedback from the programme stakeholders.
- The University organises training workshops for academic and administrative staff, and there are policies and procedures in place to enhance their professional development.

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

- implement quality assurance policies and procedures in a more regular and accurate way
- utilise internal and external feedback more profoundly when conducting periodic reviews of the programme
- collect employers' feedback about the programme in a more regular and precise manner, and versify the ways the College communicate with its alumni
- adopt more effective and formal methods to scope the labour market needs.

5.13   **Judgement**

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

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6. Conclusion

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

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Accounting & Financial Systems offered by the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences in the Gulf University.

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