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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering

College of Engineering

Gulf University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 9-12 April 2017

HC102-C2-R102

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Acronyms

AIMS	Advanced Institute Management System
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BIDE	Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CIDA	Council for Interior Design Accreditation
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CQAC	College Quality Assurance Committee
C-TLAC	College Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GU	Gulf University
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
LMS	Learning Management System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PIAB	Programme Industrial Advisory Board
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QADC	Quality Assurance Development Centre

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SER	Self-Evaluation Report
U-QAC	University Quality Assurance Committee
U-TLAC	University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee

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The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A.   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 Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) 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 BQA, 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	

B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Gulf University

A Programmes-within-College review of the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering programme offered by the College of Engineering of Gulf University (GU) was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain and the site visit took place on 9-12 April 2017.

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering programme based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by 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/BQA on 27 November 2016 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of its College of Engineering's programme with the site visit taking place in April 2017. In preparation for the review, GU conducted self-evaluation of the programme and submitted the SER with appendices on 12 February 2017.

The DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic fields of Interior Design and Interior Architecture and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised three external reviewers.

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This Report records the evidence-based conclusions and findings reached by the Panel for the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering programme 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 GU will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its 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 and administrative staff of the College of Engineering.

C.   Overview of the College of Engineering

The College of Engineering is one of the four colleges of GU and was established in 2003. The College currently consists of one department, Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department and offers only one programme, which is the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering. The vision of the College of Engineering, as stated on the GU website, is 'to provide well-developed engineers to the society *via* highly and continuously developed programmes and academic staff to support the society', as well as aiming to 'build partnerships with well-developed regional and international engineering colleges to gain wider activities for the college and to achieve better student and community services'. The mission of the College includes providing a continuous improvement process through which students receive excellent education, analytical thinking skills, and research competencies that will prepare them for professional careers and will promote their life-long learning.

D.   Overview of the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering

The Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering is offered by the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department of the College of Engineering of GU. This programme was launched in the 2012-2013 academic year and was revised and implemented in the

academic year 2016-2017. As stated in the SER, the mission of this programme is to 'graduate professional interior designers ready to work in practice and pursue further postgrad studies in the field of interior design and related disciplines'. The programme's graduates are, therefore, expected to be 'empowered with the competences and attributes needed for the development of the profession and communities in Bahrain, the region and worldwide'. The statistics provided in the SER show that four out of the seven students comprising the first cohort of the programme graduated in the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016. These four graduates are the only students who graduated from the programme since its inception. Currently, there are 42 students registered in the programme, according to the statistics offered by the institution during the site visit, with seven full-time and six part-time faculty members and two administrative staff contributing to its delivery.

E.   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Does not satisfy
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Does not satisfy
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Does not satisfy
Overall Judgement	**No Confidence**

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1.   Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

1.1   Gulf University's (GU's) vision focuses on building bonds with other universities to assist its students and the community as a whole in building a culture that nurtures continuous improvements in all aspects; while, its mission emphasizes keenness to 'provide continuous developed higher education that nurtures students' attributes towards critical thinking, life-long and reflective learning. The vision and mission of the College of Engineering are closely linked to GU's vision and mission with emphasis on the college's role in building partnerships with well-developed engineering colleges, to offer programmes that will professionally prepare graduates who are lifelong learners capable of serving their society and communities well. In addition, the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering (BIDE) programme has a clear academic planning framework in place that outlines the linkage between the vision and mission of the University and those of the College. Moreover, as evident from the SER, the programme has clearly stated aims that were revised in the academic year 2016-2017 and are properly mapped to the mission of the College. The Panel acknowledges that the programme has clearly stated aims that are revised periodically and are aligned with the college's mission, which in turn is aligned with the university's mission and vision and within a clear academic framework. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel notes that while the qualification title is unique and includes both engineering and interior design, the institution did not provide evidence on how it arrived at the title in line with academic good practice. In addition, although the title of the programme could be a market niche, the programme did not perform a rigorous benchmarking research of universities with similar dual degrees nor with labour markets to ensure appropriateness of its aims. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should revise, on the basis of formal academic benchmarking and market research, the qualification title and programme components, in order to reflect better the nature and multidisciplinary dimension of the degree.

1.2   The BIDE programme was established in 2012-2013 and revised in 2016-2017. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that 22 students were admitted to the programme this current academic year and are enrolled in the new 2016-2017 curriculum, while students who enrolled earlier (20 students) are continuing with the 2012-2013 curriculum. The two versions of the programme are organized in a study plan, with a set of prerequisites, to provide academic progression year-on-year and course-by-course with appropriate workloads for students. The total number of credit hours for each of the two curricula is 136, distributed as such: For the 2012-2013 curriculum, 25 credits are allocated for university required courses; 18 for college requirements; 83 for

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core courses; and 10 for programme electives. As for the 2016-2017 curriculum, 20 credits are allocated for university required courses; 15 for college requirements; 83 for core courses; and 18 for programme electives. Upon examination of the 2012-2013 study plan, the Panel noted that in the first year, the students study mainly general courses in design and science. Then they begin to enrol in specialized courses in interior design from their fourth semester, without there being any inclusion of specialized courses in engineering in the entire study plan. Even though the students take two construction/technical courses in the first two years 'Building Construction I' (ARC211) and 'Building Construction II' (ARC221), these are architectural courses and not engineering. Moreover, ARC221, in specific, relies heavily on theory with no real focus on practical construction skills, such as drafting, detailing, workshop, scaled models of the different building frameworks and services; it also lacks knowledge of building rules and regulations. This course and even similar practical Design Studio courses in the 2016-2017 curriculum do not provide the balance of skills and knowledge, theory and practice, which is the foundation of interior design engineering pedagogy. This lack of knowledge and skill balance in the curriculum is also reflected in the students' work examined during the site visit, specifically in their Capstone project (See paragraph 3.8). The Panel, as a result, concludes that the number of interior design engineering courses is not sufficient within the programme.

1.3   The Panel also studied the revised 2016-2017 programme in light of the 2012-2013 one and notes that the new curriculum did not fully address the need to provide a balance between theory and practice and knowledge and skills. Moreover, while the 2012-2013 mainly focused on generic and traditional interior design skills and knowledge, the 2016-2017 is more oriented towards specialized technological and digital interior design courses. In addition, the revised curriculum content is orientated more towards interior design critical thinking rather than engineering. This new direction is therefore farther away from the qualification title. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the 2016-2017 curriculum to ensure greater synergy of the programme with its aims and intended learning outcomes and that it is aligned with the qualification's title. In addition, the present transition plan between the curricula of the two programmes does not demonstrate clear guidance from the 2012-2013 to the 2016-2017 one and there is also a misalignment in the equivalency of the courses between the two curricula. For example, based on examination of course files, the Panel noted that while 'Basic Design I' (ARC110) from 2012-2013 curriculum and 'Basic Design Studio I: Exploration' (IND 111) from the 2016-2017 curriculum are claimed to be equivalent, ARC110 is a technically-related course; while, IND111 follows a design studio methodology and they are both different and not equivalent in their course description, delivery, teaching methods, Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), aims and objectives, and assessment outcomes. In addition, according to site visit interviews, students who enrolled before September 2017 are attending some courses from the 2016-2017 curriculum with students who enrolled in the programme

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this year, which according to GU staff and faculty members are equivalent to the courses that they had not taken previously in the 2012-2013 programme. This constitutes a matter of concern for the Panel, especially with the identified misalignment in the equivalency of courses between the two curricula. The Panel therefore recommends that the College should adjust the transition plan and the equivalency between the courses of the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 curricula, and teach the two curricula separately, to ensure coherent delivery of each of them.

1.4 Course specifications are documented using a formal template that includes the course code and title; number of credits awarded to the course; prerequisite requirements; instructor's contact information; course description, aims, and CILOs; weekly outline of topics with teaching, learning, and assessment methods mapped to them; course resources and facilities; regulations on academic honesty, student attendance, and deferred assessments; and a matrix mapping the CILOs to the PILOs. The Panel studied the course specifications and files provided during the site visit and was concerned that the content of the majority of courses examined is not at the appropriate level and does not meet the standard of a higher education degree in interior design and engineering. In addition, the content of the courses is not appropriately documented in terms of depth and breadth, current and relevant references, current research and professional practice. For example, the content does not sufficiently include elements that would help in the creation of a strong knowledge base of history and theory of interiors, architecture, and decorative arts. There is also not enough emphasis in it on how building materials, technology, and construction differ between and among geographical contexts or on how social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions inform interior design. The content also does not teach building codes and regulations, does not have a multi-disciplinary approach – although the qualification title does- and lacks a global perspective since it is not supported by opportunities that provide exposure to cultural diversity, such as international exchanges and study tours, off-campus exhibitions, and educational field trips, which is essential for this type of qualification. The content of courses such as 'Basic Design Studio I: Exploration' (IND111), 'Building Construction II' (ARC221), and 'Colour Theory' (IDE315) in particular does not sufficiently cover the complexity, theory, and history of interior design and engineering; it also does not address higher-order thinking and practical skills of students. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the syllabi of the new curriculum are not fully developed for courses that have not yet been taught, which raises a concern about how the programme team ensures that the syllabi of all the courses provide the depth and breadth needed for the programme. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College ensures that the syllabi are developed in advance for all courses within the 2016-2017 curriculum.

1.5 Moreover, reading lists of some courses indicate that the selected texts and reading material are outdated and/or limited in scope, which negatively impacts the quality

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and level of course delivery and assessments. For example, the reading list of 'Design Research and Methods' (ENC101), which identifies key texts for architectural research, is over 10 years old and focuses only on architecture, without including any engineering texts or Interior Design research texts. The teaching methods and activities of such courses, furthermore, were not found to diversify theoretical and practical learning outcomes. In fact, apart from the 'Interior Design Studio IV: Feasibility' (IND 313) and 'Workshops II' (IDE 433) courses, which involve a real-life design project (Studio Café) that provides students with a practical workshop and hands-on experiences, there was no evidence of consistent exposure of students to professional practice. The Panel recommends therefore that the College should revise the syllabi of courses offered to ensure that they meet local, regional and international academic standards for the disciplines and provide currency, depth, breadth, and professional practice needed for a bachelor degree in interior design engineering.

1.6   The BIDE programme has a set of 16 PILOs that are categorised in four main domains: Knowledge and understanding; subject specific skills; thinking skills; and general and transferable skills. These PILOs, according to the SER and site visit interviews, are aligned with the professional standards of the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). The Panel studied the evidence provided and concluded that although the programme aligns these PILOs with CIDA standards, the programme's curriculum does not sufficiently support the achievement of these PILOs due to deficiencies in its courses' content as explained earlier in paragraph 1.4. As for the 2012-2013 programme, its ILOs do not focus specifically on critical thinking, practical, or multi-disciplinary skills as per local and international standards and the college's mission statement. This lack of specificity was evident in the final interior design studio projects and assessments, and was confirmed during site visit interviews through which the Panel was informed that these specific skills were not integrated into the everyday teaching and learning of courses. Furthermore, despite the fact that this issue is resolved in the revised 2016-2017 curriculum, whose content is orientated more towards interior design critical thinking, there continues to be a lack of sufficient integration of engineering into the programme, where the programme focuses on technology aspects mainly rather than on engineering *per se*. Therefore, the Panel urges the College to ensure that the curriculum supports the achievement of the stated PILOs.

1.7   From the evidence provided, there is a clear mapping of the courses to the PILOs. In addition, the CILOs are explicitly stated in each course specification. However, based on the review of samples of course files and course syllabi, the Panel finds that there are no clear links/mapping between CILOs to PILOs in most courses. Moreover, in some cases, the CILOs are too narrow in scope in the sense that they fail to reflect the full professional and practical range of the topics under study {e.g. in courses 'Quantity Surveying & Contract' (CIV485), 'Refurbishment, Finishes & Furnishing'

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(IND222), 'Building Construction II' (ARC221), 'Interior Design II' (IDE220), 'Interior Design IV' (IDE320)}. In addition, there is a significant lack of scholarly writing in relation to how CILOs are expressed and there is also a lack of monitoring of academic misconduct. For, the Panel notes with concern the plagiarism of CILO A01 of the 'Refurbishment, Finishes, and Furnishing' (IND222) course, which stated: 'theories, concepts and models from a range of physiological, cultural, sociological and psychological disciplines'. This CILO was directly plagiarized from Engel's, (1989) article 'The Need for a New Medical Model: A Challenge for Biomedicine' published in *Holistic Medicine (Volume 4*, Issue 1, pp. 37-53). The Panel therefore recommends that the College should ensure that the programme adheres to higher education and scholarly codes of profession and academic conduct in relation to the writing, scoping, and mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs.

1.8   The BIDE programme includes an element of work-based learning in the form of an internship that is covered in two compulsory courses: Internship I (IND241) that is awarded one credit and Internship II (IND341) that is awarded two credits. During these courses, students are placed in private or public establishments of interior design, furniture design and production, and architecture for a total of 12 weeks (four weeks in Internship I and eight weeks in Internship 2). The SER states that this provides students with opportunities to apply the theory, knowledge and practical skills that are acquired in other courses of their programme. As a result, this would help them in meeting PILOs mainly under the categories of subject-specific skills and general and transferrable skills, which the internship courses are directly mapped to, as evident in the Programme Specification document. These PILOs focus on students applying design illustrations; developing design briefs; experimenting with interior construction, technical services, and finishing alternatives; developing supportive interior spaces; executing varied research methodologies; demonstrating effective communication skills; working independently and collaboratively; conducting self-evaluation and effective self-management; and demonstrating ethical and professional practice. The Panel is of the view that although the mapping between the internship courses and the two categories of PILOs is appropriate, the PILOs themselves are lacking in that they do not adequately reflect the nature and multidisciplinary dimension of the dual degree by not sufficiently integrating engineering into the programme (see paragraph 1.6).

1.9   Site-visit interviews with faculty revealed that students cannot enrol in the internship courses without first passing certain prerequisite courses for each of them and satisfactorily completing a certain percentage of their academic programme total credit hours (50% for Internship I and 70% for Internship II). This internship component has been revised and the Panel acknowledges the increase in the actual on-job hours of the internship from 200 to 300 hours and the fact that internal and external stakeholders are informed and supportive of these changes. In addition, the internship

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component has a clear and appropriate assessment and grading scheme through which the final grade for each of the two internship courses is distributed as follows: Field supervisor (40%), Academic supervisor (30%), and Jury assessment (30%). The internship evaluation forms that are used by the field and academic supervisors to assess a student's performance have been improved as a result of the recent internship revisions. After these forms are completed, they are submitted with the student's final internship report to an internship assessment panel or jury, to ensure quality of assessment. The Panel notes, however, that even with the revised evaluation internship forms, the assessment criteria are too generic in that they are limited to common skills such as attendance, punctuality, teamwork, critical thinking, and do not reflect specifically interior design engineering skills and knowledge. Accordingly, the Panel advises the College to revise assessment criteria for the internship, to ensure that all related assessments are based on regional and international standards of an interior design engineering programme. Despite this, the Panel overall appreciates the internship as a work-based learning element of the programme.

1.10   Gulf University has clear institutional teaching and learning policy and procedures, which according to the SER are adhered to by all GU faculty. In, addition, the Department of Architecture and Interior Design Engineering has developed a Teaching Learning, and Assessment Strategy that outlines the department's engagement in a broad range of activities to support student learning. These include a range of teaching and learning strategies and methods, opportunities for independent learning, students' exposure to professional practice and applications of theory. During interview sessions with faculty and students, the Panel confirmed that different teaching and learning methods such as lectures, presentations, case studies, projects, field trips and discussions are utilized for the delivery of the programme. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that the department's strategy is not specific enough to deal with interior design and engineering issues. Moreover, the strategy mentions nothing about e-learning, which was mentioned during the site visit interviews as being used by faculty members and which is very briefly touched upon in the university's Teaching and Learning Procedures document. Furthermore, although the policies include a range of teaching and learning methods, site visit evidence of course files demonstrated that some of the teaching methods are not being used appropriately to align with the courses' pedagogy. Also, during the site visit interviews with faculty, the Panel noted that there is a lack of understanding of interior design and engineering pedagogy. For example, the way a number of practical courses {such as 'Refurbishment, Finishes, and Furnishing'(IND222), 'Quantity Surveying and Contract' (CIV485), 'Architectural Drawing and Drafting' (IND 131), 'Interior Design 4' (IDE320), 'Colour Theory' (IDE315) and 'Building Construction 2' (ARC221)} are being taught does not demonstrate a good knowledge of teaching methods suitable for the delivery of the interior design and engineering courses at a higher education level. The teaching methods used are too generic for specialized courses and are

heavily theoretical. Additionally, despite being satisfied with the fact that students are encouraged to participate in project-based learning through workshop projects such as, the Studio Café, the Panel was not provided with enough evidence of practical teaching methods for interior design and engineering, such as: building scaled architectural models, researching and integrating lighting/acoustic/material/climate and sensory experience in the students' work. Moreover, there was no clear planning or direction on what method the students will use for each course in order to learn a specific skill. The current teaching methods are also not informed by research and do not provide the complexity and understanding of interior design and engineering pedagogy based on critical thinking. The Panel therefore recommends that the College, should enhance its teaching and learning policy to meet the nature and needs of the programme in line with international good practice and current research findings.

1.11   GU has an assessment policy and procedures, which are available to students and staff on the website and in the Staff Handbook and interviewed students and faculty showed a clear understanding of these procedures. From the review of these policy and procedures, the Panel notes that they in general appropriately address fundamental aspects of student assessment, such as: assessment principles, methods and types; alignment of student assessment and learning outcomes; marking and assessment verification; grading guidelines; feedback on assessed work; moderation of results; security of assessment documents; student appeals; and plagiarism and academic misconduct. The Panel appreciates that such policy and procedures are in place and are communicated to faculty and students. Despite the above mentioned and from the review of course files, the Panel notes that the assessment framework is unclear for many core interior design courses and does not reflect the pedagogy for interior design and/or engineering. In addition, although the assessment policy mentions formative and summative assessments and stipulates the need to provide students with timely feedback on their assessed work, and although students confirmed during site visit interviews that they receive written and oral feedback in a timely manner (within 2 weeks); nothing in the assessment policy mentions what duration counts as 'timely' feedback. Similarly, the plagiarism policy and procedures do not include visual plagiarism, and in terms of implementation, there is no consistency in detecting, assessing, and monitoring cases of plagiarism. The Panel recommends that the College should revise its assessment policy framework to reflect the specificity of interior design and engineering and ensure the prevention of acts of academic misconduct. This framework should be based on rigorous formal and informal benchmarking activities that continuously enrich the knowledge and understanding of interior design and engineering higher education standards locally, regionally and internationally.

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

- There is an element of work-based learning in the curriculum.
- Assessment policy and procedures are in place and are communicated to faculty and students.

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

- revise, on the basis of formal academic benchmarking and market research, the programme's aims, in order to reflect better the nature and multidisciplinary dimension of the degree
- revise the 2016-2017 curriculum to ensure greater synergy of the programme with its aims and intended learning outcomes and that it is aligned with the qualification's title
- adjust the transition plan and the equivalency between the courses of the 2012-2013 and 2016-2017 curricula, and teach the two curricula separately, to ensure coherent delivery of each of them
- revise the syllabi of courses to ensure that they meet local, regional and international academic standards for the disciplines and provide currency, depth, breadth, and professional practice needed for a bachelor degree in interior design engineering
- revise the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes to ensure their alignment with the programme aims and their relevance to the integration of both disciplines, interior design and engineering, to better reflect the type and level of the Bachelor of Interior Design and Engineering degree
- ensure that the programme adheres to higher education and scholarly codes of profession and academic conduct in relation to the writing, scoping, and mapping of the programme's Course Intended Learning Outcomes
- enhance its teaching and learning policy to meet the nature and needs of the programme in line with international good practice and current research findings
- revise the assessment policy framework to reflect the specificity of interior design and engineering and ensure the prevention of acts of academic misconduct.

1.14   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme.**

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2.   Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

There is a clear admission policy which is periodically revised and the admission requirements are appropriate for the level and type of the programme.

2.1   GU has a clearly stated admission policy at the university level that is available to students and staff through the Student Handbook and the university website. This policy states that to be directly admitted into the BIDE programme in specific, students must have a high school certificate or equivalent with a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 60%, pass placement tests in English, Math, Computer, Design knowledge and Drawing Skills, and pass an admission interview as well. Applicants who do not meet the full admission requirements enrol in a preparatory/foundation programme. The Panel notes, from site interviews, that applicants who do not pass the preparatory programme, can repeat its courses up to three times and after the third attempt, they get suspended. Considering the panel's concern with students' level of achievement (see paragraphs 2.2 and 3.9) and also with their low progression and retention rates (see paragraph 3.11), the Panel recommends that the College should revise its admission and foundation programme policy and procedures in a way that attracts students who are more capable of dealing with the complexity of the programme's theoretical and practical demands. This is especially needed since although the Panel was informed, during interview sessions, that the level of complexity of the test and interview questions are benchmarked against local and international standards; further examination of samples of these admission tools revealed that they do not include interior design discipline-specific questions that track the interior design affinity of the candidates and test their creative abilities. Candidates are being tested in placement tests on general mathematics and physics without a specific knowledge of the critical and technical thinking associated with the programme's area of specialization, and the questions in the interviews are way too generic and lack relevance to the programme. The Panel advises, therefore, that when revising the admission policies and procedures, the College should include admission tests and interviews for both new and transfer students according to international standards, with a clear focus on interior design engineering. Nevertheless, the Panel acknowledges that GU has clear regulations to transfer students into the programme in accordance with relevant HEC regulations and appreciates that GU admission policies and procedures are documented and communicated online and in the Student Handbook.

2.2   The profile of admitted students is monitored and maintained by the University Admissions Committee. This profile includes comprehensive information such as: students' academic background, qualification, prior studies, and practical experience. English language is the medium of teaching in the programme and students' English language proficiency is tested through Cambridge English Placement Test, unless they

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already have a valid acceptable grade in TOEFL (550 PBT / 79 IBT), or IELTS (6.0), or in the First Certificate in English Examination (FCE) (60%) or an equivalent. The Panel notes that the supporting evidence indicates low results in English language placement test for the academic year 2016-2017. In addition, during site visit interviews with students, some of them were not able to communicate in English, which raises a concern about their ability to comprehend the learning materials. The 2016-2017 cohort analysis also shows borderline math placement test results for most student applicants and considerably low results in a couple of cases. Moreover, cohort analysis indicates low progression and retention rates (see paragraph 3.9). In view of the above, the Panel, advises the College to assess the students' performance against their entry level and use the outcome when revising the admission criteria (see recommendation under 2.1), to ensure better quality of admitted students for this specific type of programme.

2.3   GU has a clear organizational chart and with respect to the BIDE programme, there is a programme management structure in place and a line of responsibilities and accountability. During the interview sessions, the Panel was informed that since the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department, which is the only department under the College of Engineering, currently offers only the BIDE programme, and due to the programme's small size, there is no programme coordinator. The SER states that the Dean manages the College, while the Head of Department (HoD) manages the programme with corresponding department and college committees; faculty members represent the programme on all these committees and in the Department Council, where they contribute to the decision-making process. The Panel studied the job description of the HoD and that of the Dean, and notes that these overlap in terms of roles and responsibilities. This is also evident in the policies and procedures governing the delivery of the programme. For example, in the University Teaching and Learning policy and procedures and all related documents, the Dean is responsible for 'Ensuring that all faculty members and students follow these procedures. Ensuring that these procedures are appropriately implemented'. The same description was under HoD with a minor difference that HoD informs students and staff of policies and procedures. These close similarities may cause confusion in the management roles and responsibilities and the Panel consequently urges the College to revise these job descriptions according to national and international standards, in order to create clear distinctions between these two leadership positions (See paragraph 4.2).

2.4   According to the statistics provided by the College at the time of the site visit, there are seven full-time and six part-time faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme. Four of the seven full-time faculty are Assistant Professors specialized in Interior Design, Architecture, Engineering, and Computers; while the other three are Lecturers specialized in Interior Design, English Language, and Management. In

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the case of the part-time faculty, three are Assistant Professors specialized in Architecture, Arabic Language, and Mathematics and the remaining three are Lecturers specialized in Architecture, English Language, and Humanities. With respect to faculty workload, the Panel was informed that it is consistent with maximum allowed load stated by the HEC, whereby the load is nine hours per week for Professors, 12 hours for Associate Professors, and 15 hours for Assistant Professors. The faculty members are also required to serve on committees and according to site visit interviews, being a member of internal committees does not change faculty members' workload. In addition, faculty members serve as advisors for their students with a student-advisor ratio of 25:1 and practice an open-door policy with their students. The student-teacher ratio at GU, however, as stated in evidence submitted during the site visit, is generally 14:1; while, according to faculty site interviews, it can range from a minimum of five students to a maximum of 25 in a class. Alongside teaching and advising, faculty members are expected to have one research publication every three semesters and to participate in two exhibitions per year. Although the faculty reported during the site visit that this workload is fair, the Panel is concerned that this may be a heavy workload to develop faculty members' professional development (PD) and research output. This is supported by the fact that there is in general a low number of research activities and promotions. The Panel studied the provided CVs of the current faculty members delivering the programme and noted that there is only one interior design specialized Assistant Professor among the faculty in 2016-2017. Moreover, the Panel noted the limited academic and practical relevant experiences of the faculty. This raises a concern that the BIDE faculty members do not collectively have sufficient academic and practical skills and experience to teach the specialized core courses of the programme. The Panel recommends, therefore, that the College increases the number of qualified interior designers and engineers, with a clear overview and division of faculty members' workload between teaching, research and administrative activity.

2.5   The Panel notes that the University has clear guidelines and procedures for recruiting new employees. The Human Resources (HR) Department receives in the second semester of every academic year a plan from the College Council with the required positions and starts the recruitment process accordingly. There is a probation period for newly hired employees and all new full-time and part-time staff receive an induction upon recruitment. According to site visit interviews, the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department has recently recruited a specialized interior design faculty member and is planning to recruit another. However, two new candidates decided not to join GU after signing the contract. This reveals to the Panel that the University is facing challenges in attracting new qualified faculty members; similarly, it is in a few cases also facing challenges in retaining existing faculty members. Since, based on an examination of the faculty retention report from 2012-2017, the College of Engineering has witnessed, despite apparently recent

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improvement, some instability in retaining faculty members, with an alarming faculty retention rate of (33%) in 2014-2015. Moreover, the Panel is concerned that the promotion policy and procedures are not clearly communicated to all faculty members, especially since the site visit interviews indicated that the promotion policy is not known by all stakeholders. This lack of clarity tends to be partly reflected in the lack of promotion of interior design engineering faculty members in the past few years. During interview sessions with senior staff, the Panel was informed that the low retention of faculty members is due to the low number of students; while, the low promotion rate is due to faculty members being recruited in the last two years only. The Panel, nevertheless, finds a misalignment between the statistics submitted on the one hand and the information stated during the site visit interviews on the other; for, the interviews revealed that many faculty members who spent longer than two years at GU, have either left the University or stayed at the same rank.

2.6   According to site visit interviews, staff appraisal occurs regularly and if a faculty member is underperforming, the HoD and the Dean will discuss the concerns and the faculty member will provide their reasons for their underperformance. Then the faculty member is given one semester to improve their performance. The Panel notes that the Staff Appraisal Form and Students' Evaluation form used for evaluating faculty performance have no clear guidelines on the assessment of teaching and research. Hence, these forms are not appropriate to record faculty members' performance or their career trajectory. This is because during the site visit the Panel noted inconsistencies and ambiguity of assessment in the staff appraisal form, specifically in the research section. The form included a section titled 'scientific activity and graduate studies', which is assessed out of 15%. The content of this section mainly assessed research activities; hence, it is unclear how the title is relevant to the content. Furthermore, although this section indicated the assessment of mainly research activities such as participating in conferences, workshops, and publications, a faculty member received a ranking or score of 15% without having published any papers or participated in conferences (which are the traditional research outputs). Therefore, the Panel is of the view that a revision of the staff appraisal form is therefore needed to include faculty members' research plans and professional development. The form should also include professional practice as part of the research output for designers, and indicate in detail the type of research activity and its relevance to the faculty members' professional development and GU's research plan. In light of the above, the Panel recommends that the College should study the reasons behind the low retention rate of faculty by developing and conducting a staff exit survey and the reasons behind their low promotion rate and develop and implement a mitigation plan including that all HR policies and procedures are available in both Arabic and English.

2.7   According to the SER, GU has a functioning management information system, which is used by faculty members, students and administrative staff. This system is called

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Advanced Institute Management System (AIMS) and contains students' information, such as personal biographic data, registration status, academic records, examination status, and data on their use of GU resources. The SER states that AIMS generates two types of reports: One is based on the students' personal information and their academic records and the second is based on the students' grades and GPA. AIMS is also able to generate study-relevant information and reports for the entire cohorts as well as for individual students. In the case of faculty members, they have access only to AIMS data of students under their supervision. The Panel acknowledges that there is a functioning AIMS for managing information related to the programme's students. Notwithstanding the above, it is unclear to the Panel how reports are utilised to inform improvements of the programme on a strategic level, beyond students' registration and academic advising. Besides this, the Panel noted during the site visit that the programme's teaching schedules are still created manually and AIMS does not yet generate reports on the utilization of GU resources and facilities based on student use and staff requirements. In order to enable informed decision-making, the Panel recommends that the College should expand its AIMS system to embrace all aspects of the programme including student admissions, student and staff surveys, pre-requisites' selection, and programme schedules.

2.8   The Panel notes that appropriate policies and procedures for security of online records and accuracy of results are implemented. Online data security is ensured with a secured backup system according to GU policy and procedure. 'Symantec Backup Express Software' backs up AIMS data on and off GU campus. The system calculates students' grades once course instructors enter the required information online, and then any changes to this data require a formal approval according to policies and procedures. This data is only accessible through protected individual passwords and usernames and is available only to relevant stakeholders. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures implemented for ensuring the security of students' online records and the reliability of the mechanism for electronically entering students' grades. Nonetheless, the Panel noted, during the site visit tour, that the hardcopy of students' graduation files and certificates are stored on an open shelf in a supervised office until the data is transported to the HEC. Although the room is attended and locked, there is a risk for the security of the hardcopy data either on campus or during its transition. Therefore, the Panel advises that further security provisions are carried out by the College by finding a more secured location.

2.9   During the site visit, the Panel toured the various facilities of the University including lecture halls, laboratories, staff offices, design studios, seminar rooms, the library, the students' Studio Café, and other facilities. While on this tour, the Panel did not find any clear signage to orient the user around the campus and noticed that students' and staff facilities are out-dated. The Panel also did not find the current physical design studios and seminar rooms to be fit for purpose; as, they are suitable for traditional

frontal lessons, without the capacity to accommodate any practical activities associated with interior design or engineering pedagogy. The Panel, nevertheless, acknowledges the presence of a workshop with a technician, and an infirmary with a full-time nurse. Although the workshop is in a separate building, its space is not large enough to accommodate large models and the equipment available in it is too basic to perform basic interior design and engineering projects and detailing. There are also no tools and machines to work with metal, plastic or textiles and, in addition, the material library listed in the 'College Presentation' provided as evidence was not visible during the tour.

2.10   With respect to the University main library, its resources, although new, are limited in relevance to interior design and include no engineering references. Moreover, site visit interviews revealed that searching for new IT and library resources is usually based on mainstream Internet sites (such as Amazon.com) rather than specialized databases and software companies. The Panel therefore recommends that the College should enhance and update its library resources with specialized databases that reflect the scope of the Interior Design and Engineering discipline and better serve the needs of the programme. In addition, from the panel's observations of the usage of facilities throughout the site visit, it was noted that students were not using the desktop workplaces or the library, and although some of them were using the available 3D printer, this 3D printer was not integrated into the analogue model-building workshop or into the course specification and assessment outcomes. Additionally, during the site visit tour, the Panel noticed that there were no allocated studio places for interior design students to leave their 3D projects and drawings. Normally, students should have an allocated workspace with large drawing tables for the entire semester where they are able to work on practical tasks and activities in a design workshop. This setting reflects the design pedagogy, where students are able to exchange and cooperate with each other informally on a variety of projects. Despite all this, it was evident for the Panel during the site visit, that the Studio Café was very popular with the students, who showed an ownership towards their project and space. The Panel considers this as an indication of the urgent need for shared and self-managed student-workspaces. Although the programme is focusing on the improvement of IT resources, the Panel also recommends that the College should focus on its physical facilities and resources, such as: improving the equipment and facilities of the workshop and the interior design engineering studios, in order to reflect the pedagogy of its specialised dual degree.

2.11   GU has a new IT tracking system called 'Labstats' to determine the usage of laboratories and other resources. With respect to the library, the Panel was informed during the site visit that there is manual tracking of students' use of the library and that the AIMS is also used to track the number of resources in the library, the books checked out and borrowed, and the overdue books. Reports generated from the AIMS

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are given to the librarian based on request. Nevertheless, based on a provided sample of reports and from the site visit tour, the Panel observed the low frequency of library usage by the faculty members and students from the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department. Similarly, with respect to lecture halls, there is a manual system for recording classroom usage; however, the Panel is of the view that this system may not be effective in the future with the growing number of students and facilities. As for e-Learning, the e-learning Unit provides the Dean with reports on 'Moodle' utilization by faculty and students. These reports are generated by the Learning Management System (LMS). Despite the generation of these reports, the Panel noticed that the use of the tracking system seems to be based on demand and has no consequences in strategic decision-making. In addition, a sample of a generated report provided to the Panel as evidence, was half in Arabic and so this information is not really accessible to staff who cannot read Arabic. The Panel recommends therefore that the College should enhance its facilities and resources' tracking systems in a manner that supports informed strategic decision-making and better future planning.

2.12   The SER states that GU provides students with sufficient support in all areas of their candidature. For example, during orientation, students receive an induction on the use of laboratories and facilities and on other areas of academia at GU. Furthermore, there are many facilities to support GU students. For example, the Students' Support Office advises and supports students in all areas of their university life and the IT Unit is responsible for maintaining and updating computer workstations and software in the computer laboratories and in design studios. Additionally, students and staff are inducted into the functions of the LMS and the e-learning Department supports them throughout the semester, which was confirmed during interview sessions with staff and students. Also, there is a small infirmary within GU's main campus to look after students' and staff health issues. The library staff also assist students and faculty members as needed. Interviewed students were highly satisfied with the support and guidance they receive. The Panel appreciates that there is generally appropriate support and advice for students, which includes the library, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources.

2.13   At the beginning of every semester, a three-day orientation programme is provided by GU for all newly admitted students, where all relevant university academic regulations, facilities, services and activities are introduced to them. During this General Orientation, regulations concerning course selection, classification and evaluation are presented and explained to the newly admitted interior design engineering students. This is followed with a College Orientation, which informs students of their programme of study and introduces them to its aims, objectives, facilities, faculty members, and academic advisors. In addition, students receive information on policies and procedures through the Student Handbook, which is also available on the university website. During site visit interviews, administrative staff

confirmed that any student who misses orientation is accommodated by being given the induction again. All of this was confirmed by the students during the site visit interviews, who seemed to be satisfied with the orientation arrangements in place. The Panel appreciates that there is an Orientation programme that is organized at both the university and programme level and caters well to the needs of the BIDE students.

2.14   The SER states that each student is allocated an academic advisor at the beginning of their studies. The academic advisor recommends the selection of courses including the selection of the graduation projects' topics. The Office of Registration at GU is responsible for tracking the performance of students at risk of academic failure. These are identified as students with CGPA below 2.0. At the end of each semester, a report with the 'at-risk' students is generated for the programme through the AIMS. Identified students then are requested to consult with their academic advisors to improve their performance through academic support or extra courses. In addition, interviewed faculty members informed the Panel that they pro-actively prevent students from becoming at risk by using encouragement techniques, having an open-door policy, and maintaining good relationships with all their students. The Panel was also informed and acknowledges that academic advisors transfer at-risk students to the Student Affairs Officers in order to assist them with their personal problems, as needed. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel advises the College to appoint a professional psychologist or counsellor, in order to identify students' personal and psychological problems as they occur and accordingly provide appropriate and specialized assistance. The statistics provided by the College indicate a number of 2-3 at-risk students per year in 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-16 academic years and the type of academic support recommended for these students by their academic advisors is in the form of extra office hours with their course instructors, as well as extra homework and encouragement of classroom activities and participation. This is in addition to extra monitoring of the students' performance by their advisors, which interviewed students confirmed being satisfied with; although, no clear evidence was presented to the Panel to demonstrate whether or not the academic support being provided to students is effective. Hence the Panel advises the College to assess the effectiveness of the academic support system provided to at-risk students.

2.15   The SER states that the Engineering College and the Department of Architectural Engineering and Interior Design expand students' learning experience through a wide range of extra-curricular activities as a part of the informal learning process. Additionally, course instructors provide students with activities such as local field trips and guest speakers that enrich their classroom learning; while, the Students' Support Office and the Alumni and Career Development Office organize with the Student Council a number of social, cultural, sport, and artistic events throughout the academic year. Interviewed students confirmed their participation in a variety of computer workshops, art exhibitions, and competitions across universities and

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indicated their satisfaction with such opportunities, which according to the SER develop students' critical thinking, creativity, innovation, teamwork skills, sense of responsibility, communication, and interpersonal skills. During the site visit, the Panel found evidence of students' involvement in informal learning activities (e.g. guest speakers, external experts talks, local field trips); still, the Panel is of the view that students need to also engage in off-campus activities on a regional or international level, such as study tours, cultural exchanges, and exhibitions amongst other activities, as per international standards for programmes similar to the BIDE. The College is therefore advised to invest in student and staff international exchanges, in order to further enrich BIDE students' learning experiences according to what is expected internationally.

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

- There is a clearly stated formal admission policy that is available to students and staff.
- There are policies and procedures implemented for ensuring the security of students' online records and the reliability of the mechanism for electronically entering students' grades.
- There is good pastoral care and support provided to students to accommodate their different needs.
- The Orientation programme is organized at both the university and programme level and caters well to the needs of the interior design engineering students.

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

- revise its admission and foundation programme policy and procedures in a way that attracts students who are more capable of dealing with the complexity of the programme's theoretical and practical demands
- recruit more specialized faculty members to teach the specialized interior design courses in the revised programme
- study the reasons behind the low retention and promotion rates amongst Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering faculty and develop and implement a related mitigation plan including that all human resources policies and procedures are available in both Arabic and English
- expand its AIMS system to embrace all aspects of the programme including student admissions, student and staff surveys, pre-requisites' selection, and programme schedules
- enhance and update its library resources with specialized databases that reflect the scope of the Interior Design Engineering discipline and better serve the needs of the programme
- focus on its physical facilities and resources, such as: improving the equipment

and facilities of the workshop and the interior design engineering studios, in order to reflect the pedagogy of its specialized dual degree

- enhance its facilities and resources' tracking systems in a manner that supports informed strategic decision-making and better future planning.

2.18 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme.**

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3.   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of aims and achieved learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and are ensured through the use of assessment which is valid and reliable in terms of the learning outcomes

3.1   The BIDE programme has eight graduate attributes that are clearly stated and mapped to the university mission, university graduate attributes, college mission, and programme aims. The SER refers to the close linkage between the PILOs, the programme aims, and the graduate attributes. The Panel therefore appreciates that the graduate attributes are closely linked to the programme aims and, as a result, clearly expressed in the PILOs. Interviewed faculty members and programme management stressed that the utilisation of assessment tools that ensure the meeting of intended learning outcomes of courses, which are mapped to PILOs, facilitate the attainment of the graduate attributes. Nonetheless, studying the provided samples of assessed students' work, the Panel concludes that the assessment tools used, as detailed in the paragraphs below, do not effectively test and assess interior design and/or engineering skills and rely strongly on testing theoretical rather than practical skills associated with interior design pedagogy. Furthermore, the Panel notes a lack of critical thinking in the theoretical and practice-based courses, which is not in line with graduate attributes 6 and 8 that indicate that the interior design engineering students are graduating with creative, reflective, technical lifelong learning skills. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the achievement of graduate attributes is evaluated through the use of assessment which is valid and reliable.

3.2   GU does not adopt a formal benchmarking policy and procedures to ensure that the programme maintains its professional and scholarly relevance and aligns with international pedagogical best practices. Nonetheless, the Panel was provided with a benchmarking report, which was produced as a result of an informal web-based benchmarking process, as stated in the SER. The Panel notes, that the benchmarking of the curriculum involves a systematic analysis of the course domains and number and weight of courses in each domain that collectively form the structure of the programme. These alignments, while helpful, do not effectively inform the focus and direction of the BIDE programme. The College needs to benchmark against interior design programmes that also place emphasis on engineering/technology. Moreover, although the Panel was informed during site visit interviews, that discussions with other universities, especially UK-based ones have helped with determining interior design engineering market needs and with idea exchange about good practices, the Panel found that these academic partnerships are for the most part relatively recent (in February 2016). Furthermore, besides email exchanges between these universities and individuals from GU, there have been no formal activities to facilitate the sharing of good practices. In addition, the benchmarking activities conducted to date are

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limited to the curriculum and do not include other items such as students' work and achievement and resources available. The Panel therefore recommends that the College should conduct formal and effective benchmarking activities, which verify GU's academic standards of the programme and its graduates with similar programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally.

3.3   There are formal assessment policy and procedures that are clear and available for students and staff. According to the SER, the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committees at the university and college level, as well as the University Examination Committee manage and monitor the implementation of the assessment policy and procedures to ensure that these are consistently implemented. These policy and procedures are also subject to an annual review, as explained by faculty members and administrative staff during the site visit interview sessions. As for assessment plans as well as courses' assessment tools, these are submitted by instructors to the college's Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (C-TLAC) for monitoring, moderation through a process of peer review, and approval. All this, the Panel was informed, is done to ensure their validity and quality. In addition, according to evidence provided as supporting materials and based on site visit interview sessions with faculty members, external jurors are invited to evaluate students' works in design courses {e.g. 'Freehand Drawing' (ARC 112) and 'Colour Theory' (IDE 315)} based on set assessment criteria that they are provided with by the College. Interviewed faculty and students were well-informed of these policies and procedures and what is expected from them. The Panel acknowledges the existence of clear and available assessment policy and procedures; however, site visit evidence of course files demonstrated that assessment methods are not being used appropriately to align with the courses' pedagogy, as will be explained in the paragraphs below. In addition, from examining course files and provided samples of students' assessed work, the Panel was able to identify some cheating and plagiarism cases that had gone undetected; there was in addition a lack of consistent implementation of plagiarism and other academic misconduct policies and procedures. Furthermore, reports provided as evidence for the plagiarism case in 'Interior Design 4' (IDE 320) and the cheating case in 'Academic Writing' (ENG116), did not mention the outcomes of these cases of academic misconduct. Hence, the Panel urges the College to evaluate the effectiveness of its practices in detecting and dealing with students' plagiarism and academic misconduct (See paragraph 1.11).

3.4   The SER states that assessments are linked to CILOs and CILOs are mapped to PILOs. Students, by passing certain assessments, therefore, and meeting their linked CILOs have a higher chance of also achieving the PILOs that the CILOs are mapped to. In other words, the mapping of CILOs to PILOs facilitates and ensures that the assessments collectively measure to what extent a student has achieved the PILOs. In addition to the mapping technique, there is an assessment and moderation policy in

place, which indicates that the programme utilizes both internal and external moderation. Through these mechanisms, the C-TLAC verifies the assessment methods and the alignment of assessment tools with the specified learning outcomes, while external moderators get appointed to ensure the accuracy, consistency and fairness of assessments. In the case of final examinations, in specific, they are pre-and-post moderated both internally and externally. In addition, and according to site visit interviews, the university and college committees well support the teaching staff to improve the assessment methods and tools according to the results of verification and moderation processes. Despite all these provisions, however, the examination of provided course files confirmed that there is a misalignment of assessment with outcomes, specifically for design and construction based courses. For example, the assessment outcomes for 'Building Construction I' (ARC211) and 'Building Construction II' (ARC221) were too theoretical and did not reflect the CILOs stated in the course specifications. ARC221, in specific, is a construction course that is, like other construction courses, highly technical and relies on workshop teaching and assessment methods, which lead in terms of intended learning outcomes to equipping students with skills such as detailing, joinery, materiality, building and services, building frames and construction technology, codes and regulations, and multi-level construction and structures. The assessments used in this course (mainly the mid-term and final exams), however, were highly theoretical and did not therefore align with the CILOs. Additionally, during site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that even the external moderators had verified that the standard of the assessments is too basic for their academic level and type. The Panel recommends therefore that the College should revise the mechanisms adopted for ensuring proper alignment of assessment with CILOs and relevance of assessment tools to course specifications.

3.5   GU has an assessments' verification and moderation procedures document that was issued in 2006 and revised in 2011 and 2016. This document, which has been approved by the University Council, describes procedures to be followed by GU for verification of major assessments, basically midterm, final examinations and key projects, in order to ensure their validity and consistency, as well as, secure accuracy and fairness of grades. These assessments are pre-moderated internally by the C-TLAC. This moderation process includes among other things, the mapping and alignment of assessment components to the CILOs and PILOs, and the results of this moderation are used by the C-TLAC to advise course instructors of any modifications needed. During site interviews with the faculty, the Panel was informed that in case any instructor has an issue with the feedback submitted by the C-TLAC in terms of modifications to be made, the instructor is given the chance to meet with the Committee to justify why they think that the changes suggested should not be made. Once these modifications are done, the examinations and projects with their model answers and rubrics respectively are sent back to the C-TLAC for approval. In the case of the midterm examinations, once approved, they are conducted by the University

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Examinations Committee, which is responsible for conducting all major examinations at GU. In the case of the final examinations and the projects, however, they are sent upon initial approval by the C-TLAC to external moderators for further verification before receiving final approval. Once the final examinations are conducted by the University Examination Committee and the projects by the Assessment Jury, and after they are marked by the instructors, the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (U-TLAC) selects random samples from the whole batch of students' examination booklets and project works it has received and verifies their marking in terms of accuracy and fairness, before issuing final grades. Once the student grade distributions are approved by the College and University Councils, they get published online for students.

3.6   During interview sessions and through examination of course files including assessment tools and moderation reports, the Panel confirmed that pre-moderation of major assessments is conducted by the C-TLAC and post-moderation of grades by the U-TLAC. Furthermore, faculty members confirmed to the Panel that internal committees support them through feedback and advice particularly on using multiple assessment methods, which provides them with flexibility to cater to diverse learners' needs. Nonetheless, although the Panel notes that the main aim of the internal moderation performed by the C-TLAC and U-TLAC is to ensure the improvement of course assessments and level of student achievement, there was no evidence on the internal moderation process supporting such improvement. On the contrary, there are ample cases where unsuitable assessment tools were used without being detected and rectified through the internal moderation (paragraphs 3.4, 3.8 and 3.11). In addition, the Panel did not find any evidence of internal post-moderation of assessments other than the final examinations and major projects. Hence, what this indicates, if anything, is a lack of internal moderation efficiency in the detection of inadequacies in assessment. The Panel therefore recommends that the College should conduct a stringent evaluation of its internal moderation system and develop and revise the policies and procedures accordingly.

3.7   GU's formal assessments' verification and moderation procedures document stipulates that in the end of each semester and after the finalization of course files, HoDs select a representative sample (25%) of the courses offered in their departments in that particular semester. They then send the course files of the selected sample to the C-TLAC, which forwards them to external moderators who review their overall assessments. Upon completion of the review, the moderators send their feedback forms back to the HoDs, who with the relevant course instructors use this feedback to further enhance their courses' assessments in the following semester. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that final examinations and design studio projects are externally pre-and-post moderated by verifiers who are selected and approved at the beginning of the semester by the College Council. External

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moderators for the design juries are invited to review students' work once per semester. According to the SER and based on site visit interviews with faculty, these external moderators and jurors are selected on the basis of their area of specialization, qualification, experience, and diversity. The Panel notes, however, that despite the presence of selection criteria, the actual selection of external moderators and jurors for the BIDE programme is largely made based on faculty networks, as was confirmed during interview sessions. Furthermore, although feedback from external moderation reports reflects a general confidence in the assessment processes within the programme, site visit interviews with external moderators indicated that the standard of the assessments is considerably basic for the academic level and type; since, in some assessment components, only knowledge is emphasized with limited incorporation of items requiring creativity and higher-order thinking on the part of the student. In addition, it was confirmed during these interviews that the external moderators are unclear about what has been done with their recommendations, since they were not provided with any feedback on changes or modifications done by the College on the basis of their moderation reports. This was further confirmed by the Panel during its on-site examination of course files and other documents, where no evidence of formal mechanisms to implement the external moderators' feedback and to contribute to the improvement of the programme was found. On the contrary and as indicated in paragraphs 3.4, 3.8 and 3.10, what was detected through close scrutiny of samples of students' assessed work was a continuing weakness in questions in terms of their level and requirements, which reflects a deficiency in the external moderation process. Therefore, although the Panel acknowledges that the programme has introduced external jurors to evaluate students' works in design courses and there are plans for their ongoing utilization as external moderators; the Panel, nevertheless, recommends that when deciding on external moderators and jurors, the College should abide by its set selection criteria, which can secure a high degree of objectivity, and should develop and implement formal mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the moderation process and develop a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the process.

3.8   During the site visit, the Panel was provided with ample samples of students' assessed work. The Panel studied the samples provided and notes that different assessment tools are used for different courses, and are varied in complexity and in practical, academic and professional skills. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that the assessment tools utilized are not always relevant or appropriate to the level and type of the programme. For example, a close examination of 'Basic Design Studio I: Exploration' (IND 111), 'Building Construction 2' (ARC 221) and 'Colour Theory' (IDE 315) course files during the site visit, revealed that the final examination questions of these courses are too basic for a higher education level and do not provide any opportunity for critical thinking or practice-based learning for levels 1, 2 and 3. Similarly, other assignments were found to be, upon scrutiny, not appropriate and very basic in comparison to higher education standards. For instance, the weekly

written quizzes in general do not encourage critical thinking and analysis, to research and understand the history and theory of interior design and engineering. A number of students' Capstone projects also revealed a lack of reference to critical thinking, design precedents, contemporary theories and practices of spatial production, or key monographs. Moreover, despite the emphasis placed upon 'engineering' in the programme title, the student projects lacked any detailing of construction, technology and material characteristic of engineering programmes. In essence, engineering should be embedded into the interior design outcomes, but there was limited evidence of this in the Capstone project.

3.9   On the same lines, scrutiny of the course files indicated to the Panel that the level of students' achievement is not appropriate to the type and level of the programme. For example, only few students are using consistent referencing conventions in their assignments; since, referencing standards are not being emphasized according to scholarly practices. Some bibliographies, for example, featured questionable sources of information, mainly URL's without reference to the recommended core texts, or scholarly and credible publications. In addition, students' interpretation and presentation skills of assignments lack academic critical thinking and understanding of the basic requirements of presentations. The Panel consequently notes that due to the assignments being very basic in their complexity, the grades are generous, with the most successful student drawing heavily from a reference, to a point of near plagiarism, which suggests that imitation and duplication were rewarded over originality. Furthermore, and as stated under paragraphs 1.8 and 3.3, there is evidence of clear cases of plagiarism presented in graded students' work without any detection of these cases. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the College should develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the type and level of students' work, including the Capstone project, meet the requirements of the programme and are comparable with what can be found in other similar programmes offered locally, regionally, and internationally.

3.10   According to the SER, the mapping of all assessment components to all ILOs of courses, which themselves are mapped to the PILOs, in addition to the existing internal and external moderation processes, help in ensuring that the graduates meet the programme ILOs and aims. GU sets a 60% score or a 'D' grade as a target for achieving the PILOs and relies on feedback from multiple surveys (e.g. graduates and employers) to indirectly determine the levels of its graduates' achievement. The Panel studied the final grade distribution sheets included in the course files submitted as site visit evidence, as well as the distribution of graduation grades for 2015-2016 provided in Table 3.8.1, and notes that the grades in a considerable number of courses are not balanced and tend to be on the generous side {e.g. 'Behavior Aspects in Design' (IND 222), 'Design Research and Methods' (ENC 101), and 'Quantity Surveying' (CIV485)}. The Panel is of the view that this goes back to the assessment components of courses

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being too basic in general for the level they are at and, hence, being inappropriate for a Bachelor of Interior Design programme. What this consequently indicates is that although students' graduation GPAs for 2015-2016 followed a normal distribution, where students graduated with GPAs in the range of 2.36 to 3.82, students' achievement and progress through the programme as reflected in the level and quality of their assessed work is not suitable, and does not align with what is expected, for the type and level of the programme. This was confirmed during site visit interviews with alumni, employers, and internship supervisors who expressed concerns with respect to graduates' ability to communicate clearly, read architectural floor plans, or perform minimum technical requirements associated with interior design. The Panel is therefore of the view that despite mapping practices, assessment and moderation policies and procedures, the graduates' levels of achievement do not meet the programme's aims and ILOs. The Panel as a result urges the programme to address the complexity of assessment tools and requirements based on local, regional, and international teaching and learning benchmarking activities, so as to improve graduates' level of achievement (see recommendations under 3.4-3.9).

3.11   Despite the small students' cohort, there is a cohort analysis for Interior Design Engineering Programme. This analysis however is restricted due to the relative infancy of the programme and to the low number of students; hence, the available data cannot be considered indicative of the performance of the programme. Taking these limitations into consideration and studying the data provided, the Panel notes that the cohort analysis indicates an improvement in student numbers from 2012-2013 to 2016-2017 with the number of admitted students ascending from seven to 23 and the retention ratio dropping from 57.1% to 100% respectively. The lowest retention rate of 33.3% was recorded in the academic year 2014-2015 and the Panel was informed during interview sessions that this high student attrition rate was mainly due to students' personal issues. As for the length of the study period, the average for the 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 cohorts is 3.7 and 3.5 respectively, with quite low progression ratios again due to high student withdrawals. As stated in the SER, there is no published formal data on the progression ratios and graduation rates of similar programmes for GU to compare its cohort analysis data with. Nevertheless, the Panel advises that despite personal reasons leading to students' withdrawal, GU needs to investigate this attrition further in order to understand and monitor students' progress and develop mechanisms that assist students with their study plan in the future. In addition, although the Panel acknowledges the apparent improvement in the admission and retention rate, it advises the College to conduct a formal research on this positive change in order to understand this improvement and niche in the Bahrain market. Such research is especially needed since, during site visit interviews, staff and students confirmed that the major appeal to the programme was due to its title 'Interior Design Engineering' and so such an investigation can help determine if students' expectations are being met at the end of their candidature. Furthermore, the

Panel encourages the College to continue conducting its cohort analysis and utilize its findings to further improve the programme.

3.12   The Department of Architecture Engineering and Interior Design adheres to GU's Teaching and Learning Policy, which, has a section on the internship programme. This programme was revised in 2016-2017 to include two internship sessions/courses {'Internship I' (IND241) and 'Internship II' (IND 341)} instead of only one course, as was earlier the case. As stated in Indicator 1, the courses have clear prerequisites and assessment guidelines and procedures. The Panel notes the benefits of the internship programme to the students' professional practice and the assessment processes put into place. The Panel also acknowledges that the GU-Internship Procedures document provides clear information on how the internship is organized and assessed and that the internship evaluation forms have been improved. As per the Internship Procedures document, the internship programme should be preparing students for professional practice in the industry, equipped with the required intellectual, personal, and professional skill-set according to local and international standards. However, studying the assessment forms provided, the Panel notes that these only assess the overall performance of the interns and their work ethics and do not clearly assess the performance of the students' skills relevant to interior design and engineering. The Panel suggests therefore the revision of the form to assess the interns' design, construction, communication and theoretical skills in the workplace. In addition, the Panel noted that students are usually placed for their internship only in workplaces that are of more relevance to interior design than to engineering, like: interior design firms, furniture showrooms, or architectural and spatial design businesses, thus calling into question the issue of whether the work experience they are gaining is necessarily 'professionally' relevant to both interior design and engineering subject areas combined under their dual degree programme. Accordingly, the Panel encourages the College to revise internship placements on the basis of a wider scope of employments covering both subject areas of the programme.

3.13   The BIDE programme includes a Capstone project (IND413) that is assigned eight credit hours and students are eligible to take this course if they successfully complete 115 credits of their programme including the prerequisite courses 'Interior Design Studio V: Hollistic' (IND 411) and 'Internship II' (IND 341). The Panel acknowledges that there are policies and procedures related to the Capstone project that stipulate the responsibilities and duties of the academic advisors, HoD, graduation project supervisors, and students. As per the Graduation Project Procedures document, the students discuss their Capstone topics during an advisory session organized by their academic advisor. After this, the academic advisor sends the list of eligible students for the Capstone project with their proposed project themes to the HoD, who then assigns with the Department Council project supervisors for the students and organizes a seminar in the early phase of the projects to discuss and evaluate students'

prospective project methodologies and plans. In the first week of the eighth semester, the project supervisor works with their students on preparing plans for the project phases, relevant to their study level and their special needs, if any. Students then begin developing their projects and implementing them under the weekly guidance of their supervisors and on the basis of formative feedback provided by internal assessment panels assigned by the HoD. The responsibility of the supervisors involves guiding students and helping them to overcome their weaknesses and challenges as well as helping them stay on track with respect to fulfilling project phases and meeting deadlines. In the 13th week of the semester, students submit their pre-final reports and presentations to their academic supervisors to be assessed; while, in the end of the semester, their final Capstone reports and presentations get assessed by both their supervisors and a jury panel who conducts final oral assessments for the students. Interviewed students were satisfied with the support provided by their project supervisors. Moreover, the breakdown of assessment for the Capstone project includes 10% for the project seminar, 10% for the pre-jury assessment, 60% for the final jury assessment and 20% for the project progression. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with the opportunity to study a number of students' Capstone projects, where most of these revealed as explained under paragraph 3.9 a lack of reference to necessary theoretical knowledge, higher-order thinking skills, and engineering-specific details. Therefore, the Panel urges the College, as recommended in paragraph 3.9, to address concerns outlined above by the Panel with respect to the type and level of students' Capstone projects in particular and assessed works in general.

3.14   The Interior Design Engineering Programme has a Programme Industrial Advisory Board (PIAB), which according to the PIAB Terms of Reference document was established in 2006. This Board is comprised of local employers and alumni. Most of the advisory board members are discipline experts in interior design, architecture, or engineering. The Board meets twice a year and the meetings are minuted and provide useful feedback to the programme, including the revision of the new curriculum as evident in the minutes of meetings provided to the Panel. One of the roles of the advisory board is to ensure through their expertise and feedback that the programme graduates are well-prepared with the employability skills and competencies needed in the professional world. This ensures the currency of the programme's professional practice. Another role, as expressed by the PIAB members in interview sessions, is to promote the BIDE programme in the local community and to help the programme by suggesting potential workplaces for students' internship. During site visit interviews with the advisory board members, they confirmed that they feel their recommendations are both acknowledged and implemented. Nevertheless, although the PIAB is involved in the decision-making process, the Panel was informed, during site visit interviews, that only a few board members provide sufficient support to the programme since the rest of the members are usually unable to attend all meetings due to other commitments. In result, the Panel appreciates that there is a programme

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advisory board with clear terms of reference, includes members who are discipline experts, employers, and alumni, and provides feedback that supports the programme improvement. Nonetheless, the Panel advises that the College improves the selection process of advisory board members, to include members who are more available and specialized specifically in interior design engineering, who can more effectively contribute to the programme.

3.15   In addition to the advisory board, GU seeks feedback from both alumni and employers to review and to develop the academic programme and associated courses and activities. The Quality Assurance and Development Centre (QADC) conducts surveys to collect feedback from graduates and employers, and the results indicate a general satisfaction with the programme. Nonetheless, interviewed employers identified areas of improvement for the programme graduates that include the development of visual communication skills and professional practice awareness and practical experience. Whereas, interviewed graduates identified a need for more professional practice skills such as budgeting and business management capabilities. Furthermore, the Panel was unable to find evidence of formal mechanisms that researched and responded collectively to the external stakeholders' feedback, and thus urges the College to address these concerns when reviewing the programme (See paragraph 4.8).

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

- graduate attributes are closely linked to the programme aims and, as a result, clearly expressed in the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.
- There is a programme advisory board with clear terms of reference, discipline experts, employers, and alumni.

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

- ensure that the achievement of graduate attributes is evaluated through the use of assessment which is valid and reliable
- conduct formal and effective benchmarking activities, which verify Gulf University's academic standards of the programme and its graduates with similar programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally
- revise the mechanisms adopted for ensuring proper alignment of assessment with Course Intended Learning Outcomes and relevance of assessment tools to course specifications
- conduct a stringent evaluation of its internal moderation system and accordingly develop and revise the policies and procedures accordingly
- abide, when deciding on external moderators and jurors, by its set selection criteria, which can secure a high degree of objectivity, and should develop and

implement formal mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the moderation process and develop a mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the process

- should develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the type and level of students' work, including the Capstone project, meet the requirements of the programme and are comparable with what can be found in other similar programmes offered locally, regionally, and internationally.

3.18 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates.**

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4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently across the college

4.1 There is a comprehensive set of institutional policies and procedures for teaching and learning, programme reviews, and assessment. These are available on the university website and in the GU Handbook; they are also featured during the induction of new staff members and students. At GU, adherence to policy and procedures is operated at two levels. At the university level, there is a Quality Assurance and Development Centre (QADC), which works in coordination with the University Quality Assurance Committee (U-QAC) and the College Quality Assurance Committees (C-QACs) to pinpoint areas of improvement and provide the support needed to address them. The SER states that the main role of the QADC is 'to support, monitor, and ensure the quality implementation of university-wide range of policies and procedures', and it fulfils this role mainly through two quality assurance audits that it conducts every academic year in coordination with the university and college quality assurance committees. This is in addition to conducting *ad hoc* audits during the academic year that focus on particular issues based on internal and external requirements. At the college level, the administrative and support staff, as well as the C-QAC, which includes faculty members representing the College and the programme, work under the guidance of the college dean and HoDs on preparing all the required evidence, files, and documents needed for each audit cycle. The Panel acknowledges that there is a comprehensive set of policies and procedures with clear responsibilities; nevertheless, based on the evidence provided during the site visit and staff interviews, the Panel found that some policies relevant to the programme, such as internship, plagiarism, and staff promotion are not known by all stakeholders. This inadequate communication of policies also led in some cases to their inconsistent application (See paragraphs 1.8, 3.3, 4.4). The Panel therefore recommends that the College assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms utilized to communicate and monitor the implementation of all policies and procedures, to ensure shared understanding and implementation across the College.

4.2 The Panel notes that along with the HoD, the Dean, and the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the college's committees and councils help manage the programme's decision making and these include: The College Quality Assurance Committee, Department Council, College Council, Programme Review and Development Committee, and the Advisory Board. These committees and councils manage the programme at a college level and according to the SER, the Department Council is the highest authority in the department and it is chaired by the HoD and includes faculty and student representatives. The Department Council tackles and

discusses all issues related to the programme, provides recommendations to the College Council and the College Dean, to whom it directly reports. Decisions related to the programme are made in consultation with the specialized internal committees; however, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who reports directly to the University President, is the custodian of the academic standards. During the site visit interviews, the Panel noted an ambiguity in the roles and responsibilities of each of the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the Dean, and the HoD, as reported during interview sessions. In addition, internal stakeholders were unable to clearly identify the custodian of the quality assurance standards in the programme. This ambiguity and lack of clarity cast a shadow over the effectiveness of the programme's leadership. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that there is a shared understanding of the lines of responsibility amongst academic and administrative staff to ensure that the programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.

4.3   GU has an overall formal University Quality Assurance Framework document (not dated) and a quality assurance management system in relation to the programme, which is managed by the QADC. In addition, the Panel was informed through site visit interviews that there are programme audits that occur periodically in the months of October and March of each academic year and according to Quality Audit Procedures. These audits along with other *ad hoc* audits are conducted, as explained in paragraph 4.1, in coordination with the university and college quality assurance committees, which ensure that the required documents and evidences are well-prepared and available for the audit cycles. The purpose of these audits, as stated in the SER, is 'to monitor the implementation of university policies and procedures as well as adherence to quality assurance standards' and the resulting audit reports enable the College to develop improvement plans for managing quality of its activities. In addition, while the U-QAC promotes the quality assurance culture within the University and supports colleges in their adherence to and application of internal and external quality assurance standards, each C-QAC directs and manages the proper implementation of the university policies and procedures and makes recommendations for the College and its departments on quality enhancement plans and actions. The Panel therefore appreciates the provision of a structure for the management of QA within the College of Engineering in which the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department is housed. However, despite the role of the C-QAC described above with respect to supporting quality assurance; the fact that the terms of reference of this committee, as well as the procedures it should follow to ensure consistency in implementation of quality procedures across all programmes, keep constantly changing through formal revisions done by the University (specifically in 2013 and 2016), is acting as an obstacle preventing quality assurance culture and implementation within the College from reaching any maturity level. This is reflected in the fact that the course files examined during the site visit revealed to

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the Panel that there is a lack of implementation of policies on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, as per indicator 1 and 2, the quality of teaching and learning is not specific to interior design engineering pedagogy and education and the assessment criteria are not appropriate for such a programme that requires strong theoretical knowledge, technical and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system's policies and implementation and for addressing the identified areas of improvement.

4.4   The SER states that staff members are committed to quality assurance and enhancement at all levels: department, college, and university. This is enforced mainly through participation in quality assurance committees and ad hoc meetings, as well as in local workshops and international conferences in the area of higher education development. This is in addition to sharing the responsibility of monitoring their own performance and meeting set targets. The Staff Professional Development Office, which has been placed as a unit in the QADC and which works in coordination with the colleges, organizes a wide range of training sessions for the staff including training in the area of quality assurance. Also, as was mentioned in paragraph 2.5, all staff at GU receive an induction at university, college, and department level through which, as stated in the SER, they are familiarized with quality assurance culture and practices. The Panel acknowledges that faculty members, support staff, and committees participate in quality assurance training and activities, and many faculty members are on relevant college and university committees. However, during site visit interviews, faculty members were unable to explain how they integrate quality assurance in their role in order to ensure effective teaching and learning. Faculty members' knowledge of quality assurance is also not reflected in the course syllabi's learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and PILOs. In addition, during the site visit, the Panel noted that there was a lack of consistency in dealing with many cases of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism and examination cheating. In conclusion, according to the site interviews, faculty members are continuously involved in the programme decision-making, and its improvement plan; they also have a good understanding of formal auditing and quality assurance processes. However, their lack of understanding to the relevance of these processes to the daily pedagogy and education of interior design and engineering impedes them from suggesting improvements through the everyday teaching, which simultaneously informs quality assurance. The Panel advises the College to address this issue.

4.5   New programmes are developed and introduced based on GU's 'Programme Design, Development, and Approval Policy and Procedures'. This policy emphasizes the involvement of academic staff members as well as input from internal and external stakeholders, including current and former students and employers in the design and development of new programmes. It also stresses, when developing a new

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programme, the need for compliance with all the requirements necessary for a qualification to be registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), as well as compliance with the regulations of the HEC and the requirements of the BQA. The policy stipulates that the development of any programme should be driven by the university vision, mission, and strategic direction; should meet the aspirations for employment of its graduates; should be benchmarked against other programmes identified as embodying best practice in design and delivery; and should be based on internal and external stakeholders' feedback. Once the programme is developed, it is submitted to the University Council for approval and then to the Board of Trustees for final endorsement. However, the Panel was informed during interview sessions that no new programme was introduced in the College based on the newly developed policy. The Panel acknowledges that there is a suitable policy for introducing new programmes in the College.

4.6   GU has policy and procedures for programmes' review and development, which the College of Engineering is expected to adhere to. The documents stipulate that at the end of each academic year, the HoD coordinates with the College Council to collect feedback from stakeholders and utilize this feedback for identifying strengths and areas for improvement. According to the SER, the process of collecting feedback includes students' evaluations on courses and instructors conducted anonymously, instructors' course reports, peer reviews of teaching staff, tracking reports of learning and physical resources, PIAB recommendations, and moderators' reports. Based on the feedback collected, minor modifications are proposed and sent for review and approval by the college's Programme Review and Development Committee. Once the modifications are approved, a resolution to begin their implementation in the following semester is issued by the Dean of the College. According to site visit interviews, the QADC audits this annual programme review, and thus ensures through it the sustainability of the programme. So far, policies and procedures for programmes' review and development have been followed on the newly revised programme, which has also been evaluated and reviewed by external and internal stakeholders. This was evident from site visit interviews with faculty who confirmed preparation of evaluative course reports in the end of every semester and with students who reported taking part in course and instructor evaluation surveys every semester, where both faculty and students reported that their comments were taken into consideration for improvement of the programme. In addition, completed student evaluation surveys, course files including faculty's course reports as well as moderators' feedback, and other documents related to the revision of the curriculum were presented to the Panel as evidence of programme evaluation. The Panel appreciates that there are arrangements in place for annual review of the programme based on internal and external stakeholders' recommendations. Nevertheless, the Panel encourages the College to develop an effective system for communicating survey results, analysis, and implementation to all stakeholders; since, some

stakeholders (e.g. alumni and external moderators) mentioned in interview sessions that it was not clear to them how their survey or moderation feedback had led to programme modifications.

4.7   The Panel recognises that there are policies and procedures for the periodic review of the programme every four to five years, and the first review was initiated after the graduation of the first student cohort. The periodic review is based on data from internal and external stakeholders collected and analysed by a programme team put together by the Department Council. Once the feedback is analysed and major modifications and an improvement plan are proposed by the programme team, the College Council reviews them and makes recommendations to the College Programme Review and Development Committee. This committee then ensures that proposed modifications are appropriately aligned with the university vision, mission, core values, graduate attributes, and national and international standards. It also develops and finalizes the revised programme specifications in consultation with the programme team and three external reviewers before sending its recommendation to the College Council for approval, and from there to the University Programme Review and Development Committee for further scrutiny and finally to the University Council for final endorsement. Following endorsement, a resolution is issued by the University President to implement the revised programme and the College Dean with the relevant HoD work on its implementation with the academic faculty. In addition, there is also a periodic audit to ensure quality assurance policies and procedures are being implemented across the College. Faculty members, senior management and the QADC are involved in this process and the recommendations are implemented through a formal process according to policies and procedures. Although, there are mechanisms available for periodic reviews, and despite the implantation of the periodic review of the programme, there is almost no evidence of clear strategies for obtaining feedback from relevant stakeholders and it is unclear how the programme analyzes the data from the review to continuously make improvements to the programme. Furthermore, the policy is not comprehensive enough to cover different mechanisms and issues related specifically to interior design engineering, such as: visual plagiarism, student and staff grievance, internship substitutions for students who are unable to find employment, and alignment of CILOs and PILOs to appropriate teaching methods according to interior design engineering pedagogy. In addition, and based on site visit interviews, monitoring and implementation of improvements are managed informally. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the periodic review is well-informed by stakeholders' feedback and market professional needs and is comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of the review.

4.8   The SER states that GU with its colleges and support units conduct regular surveys to collect feedback from both internal and external stakeholders, the purpose of which is to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of its educational services and overall

activities and to make decisions on programme revision and development. These surveys include students' general satisfaction survey, students' exit survey, students' evaluation of courses and instructors survey, alumni survey, employers' survey, staff development survey, and internship supervisor survey, and their feedback is utilized in addition to other sources of input such as committee minutes, moderation reports, and PIAB comments, to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and meets stakeholders' expectations. The Institutional Performance Measurement Office, which is one of the units of the QADC, is responsible for conducting extensive analysis and dissemination of all collected feedback and data to assist the University and its colleges and units in developing their policies, procedures, regulations and overall services and activities. According to site visit interviews with faculty and senior management, once the analyses are reported to the departments, the HoDs discuss the results with the instructors and guide them in initiating and implementing the necessary changes to improve their programmes. The Panel appreciates that there is a range of methods for collecting stakeholders' feedback to inform decision making on programme delivery and development. Nevertheless, from site-visit interviews with different stakeholders, the Panel could not establish how this collected information informs the programme's decision-making; since, there was a general lack of clarity on the part of some stakeholders about how their survey results feed back into programme development or improvement. Moreover, some stakeholders confirmed that not all feedback is responded to. This was confirmed by the fact that although some areas for improvements were identified by employers and alumni, such as the development of visual communication skills as well as professional practice awareness and capabilities in budgeting and business management, the Panel was unable to find evidence of formal mechanisms that researched and responded collectively to this feedback (see paragraph 3.15). Furthermore, although for example a low faculty retention rate was evident in a few academic years (see paragraph 2.5), there continued to be no formal mechanism in place to conduct staff exit surveys from which feedback could be utilized to understand and simultaneously mitigate the reasons behind faculty retention. In addition, survey forms in general must be improved in order to address the programme's specific needs; since, for example, the Student Evaluation Form includes only general evaluation criteria, with no clear guidelines on the assessment of courses' and instructors' teaching and research specifically relevant to interior design and engineering knowledge, skills, and practice. The Panel recommends therefore that the College should develop clear and programme-specific mechanisms to analyze all stakeholders' feedback and utilize its results to inform programme development and improvement in a transparent manner available to relevant stakeholders.

4.9   As stated in the SER, GU 'aims to ensure that the staff are able to acquire updated knowledge and information in their disciplines as well as aware of and able to apply proper and developed methods of teaching, learning, and assessment in their assigned

courses'. The SER states that faculty attend conferences, workshops related to their profession, and workshops on a range of topics including assessment, e-learning, benchmarking, quality assurance, NQF and mapping standards. They also participate in evaluating the PD events they attend through filling a training evaluation form that assesses the content, activities, trainer's performance, venue, and timing of the training session. All of this was confirmed by the Panel upon examination of related site visit evidence such as samples of conference attendance certificates and samples of completed staff evaluation forms of training sessions. During site visit interviews, interviewed senior staff confirmed the introduction of a research funding scheme in order to assist faculty members in their professional development. This scheme includes conference funding and staff workshops. Senior management and faculty members also confirmed that generally workshops are recommended by senior management based on needs identified through staff appraisals; however, faculty members are also free to choose their own professional development as required. According to the SER, the Staff Professional Development Office, which is a unit within the QADC, coordinates with the Human Resources Unit in preparing staff development plans for each academic year; it also seeks external training opportunities offered by other higher education institutions and professional bodies. The Panel appreciates the existence of a varied range of PD opportunities and a research funding scheme to enhance faculty's knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, the Panel is concerned, as explained in paragraph 2.4, that the faculty's workload can have a negative impact on their PD participation and research output. The Panel is also of the view that arrangements for identifying continuing professional development needs of staff and meeting them are not effective. This is because although professional development training is linked to staff appraisal, the inconsistencies and deficiencies pinpointed earlier in the appraisal form (see paragraph 2.5), render it as inappropriate for recording faculty members' performance, professional needs, and career trajectory; as a result, basing the identification of faculty's PD needs on it is therefore unreliable. In light of this, therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should revise its staff appraisal form and develop and implement suitable PD mechanisms in a manner that ensures the accurate identification of faculty's training needs and the availability of sufficient time and relevant PD and research opportunities for addressing them.

4.10 According to the SER, the College of Engineering relies heavily on the feedback of the PIAB members, who represent employers in the profession of interior design and architecture, to identify labour market needs and determine what is expected of the BIDE programme. In addition, employers' and alumni feedback, although limited due to the small number of graduates from the programme, is utilized in identifying the degree of fit between the graduates' skills on the one hand and what is expected by the industry on the other hand, which helps in determining the currency and relevance of the programme to the labour market. In addition, with respect to the BIDE programme in specific, the College has also relied on a labour market report written

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in Arabic and published in 2016 titled 'A Study of the Labour Market Needs in Bahrain and GCC'. The Panel is of the view that this report, as indicated by its title, was not written specifically for the BIDE programme and was instead a general scoping of the labour market needs irrelevant to the type and niche of interior design engineering. Additionally, the data in this report is outdated (from 2014) and is no longer relevant to research the labour market niche in Bahrain and the GCC. On the same lines, while the Panel notes that the PIAB, alumni, and employers' feedback and secondary data are important as preliminary studies, they however do not constitute labour market research specific to an interior design engineering multidisciplinary and dual degree. Since such a degree requires up-to-date market research based on primary sources, in order to find relevancy of its niche. Hence, the Panel is of the view that the mechanisms employed for market research by the programme and by GU and are not appropriate, since they do not provide the scope for the specific specialties, and rely on secondary data. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct an up-to-date rigorous labour market research, to ensure the validity and sustainability of interior design engineering, and its relevance to the needs of the labour market.

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

- There is provision of a structure for the management of quality assurance within the College of Engineering in which the Architecture and Interior Design Engineering Department is housed.
- There are arrangements in place for annual review of the programme based on internal and external stakeholders' recommendations.
- There is a range of methods for collecting stakeholders' feedback to inform decision making on programme delivery and development.
- A varied range of professional development opportunities and a research funding scheme are available to enhance faculty's knowledge and skills.

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

- assess the effectiveness of the mechanisms utilized to communicate and monitor the implementation of all policies and procedures, to ensure shared understanding and implementation across the College
- ensure that there is a shared understanding of the lines of responsibility amongst academic and administrative staff to ensure that the programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership
- develop a plan for evaluating the effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system's policies and implementation and for addressing the identified areas of improvement

- ensure that the periodic review is well-informed by stakeholders' feedback and market professional needs and is comprehensive enough to cover all aspects of the review
- develop clear and programme-specific mechanisms to analyze all stakeholders' feedback and utilize its results to inform programme development and improvement in a transparent manner available to relevant stakeholders
- revise its staff appraisal form and develop and implement suitable professional development mechanisms in a manner that ensures the accurate identification of faculty's training needs and the availability of sufficient time and relevant professional development and research opportunities to address them
- conduct an up-to-date rigorous labour market research, to ensure the validity and sustainability of interior design engineering, and its relevance to the needs of the labour market.

4.13 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.**

BQA

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5.   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/BQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2014*:

There is no confidence in the Bachelor of Interior Design Engineering (BIDE) programme offered by the College of Engineering of the Gulf University.

BQA

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