Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor of Human Resource Management Programme

College of Administrative & Financial Sciences

Gulf University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 8-10 December 2014

HC061-C2-R061

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Acronyms

ARADO	Arab Administration Development Organisation
ARMS	Academic Record Management System
BHRM	Bachelor of Human Resource Management
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPA	Grade Point Average
GU	Gulf University
HEC	Higher Education Council
HOD	Head of Department
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance Education &Training
QAC	Quality Assurance Centre
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UK	United Kingdom

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1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1. 1   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

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

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1. 2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Gulf University

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

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

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

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The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Human Resources Management and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised five external reviewers.

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

(i)   analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit;

(ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers);

(iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to GU for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty members in the Bachelor of Human Resource Management programme and the interviewed staff members of the institution.

1. 3   Overview of the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences

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

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1. 4 Overview of the Bachelor of Human Resource Management Programme

The Bachelor of Human Resource Management programme is one of two programmes offered by the Administrative Sciences Department in the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences. Ennoblement in the programme started in the academic year 2005-2006 under the name 'Bachelor of Human Resource Management and Public Relations'. As result of a comprehensive review, the University changed the name of programme as 'Bachelor of Human Resource Management', and changed the content of programme and its curriculum to be appropriate for the new name. Although the programme was subject to a recurrent temporary suspension between 2009-2010 and 2011-2012, admission in the programme was resumed in September 2012, and the total number of students enrolled in the programme in the second semester of the academic year 2012-2013 was 48 students most of them were Bahrainis. The programme is delivered by nine faculty members in addition to 12 faculty members who devote part of their teaching time to the delivery of the programme.

1. 5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Human Resource Management programme

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

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2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

2. 1   The College of Administrative & Financial Sciences has a mission statement that is linked to the university mission statement and the relation between the department mission and the college is tabulated. The objectives of the Bachelor of Human Resource Management (BHRM) programme is well-articulated and are consistent with the programme's framework and title. The mission of the College of Administrative Sciences is linked to the university's mission. The college's mission is translated into a department mission, which is, in turn, linked to the college's mission as well. The programme aims to prepare qualified graduates in the field of human resource management who are capable of contributing to solve human resource issues as well as enabling students to acquire skills of critical thinking, analysis and self-learning. The aims of the programme are consistent with the department and college's missions. During the site visit, it was clear that the faculty members are aware of the programme and department objectives as well as the college and university's missions. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims are clear and appropriate and are in line with the department and college missions.

2. 2   The BHRM programme consists of 130 credit hours that are distributed over eight semesters with 118 credit hours for the compulsory courses and 12 credit hours for the elective courses. In general, the Panel finds that the study load is appropriate where the minimum credit hours a student has to study is 12 credit hours and the maximum number is 19 credit hours for each semester. This study load is comparable to those of similar programmes. The programme was revised recently to focus mainly on human resources after it was covering human resources and public relations, and the Panel is pleased with this change. Additional courses in the field of human resources were included in the programme to be consistent with the programme title and objectives. The new study plan was implemented at the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015, and the University reserves the right to transfer students to new programmes and apply new polices on the students in accordance with the general policy of the University. The Panel finds no perturbation for students to follow the new study plan as long as the transfer from the old study plan to the new one is controlled to ensure no additional load is assigned to the students. The SER states that the programme provides regular academic course-on-course and year-on-year progression. The Panel studied the sequence of courses and found that the programme, overall, provides a logical sequence across courses and years of study. However, the Panel noted that the course 'Introduction to Human Resources' (HRM201) is assigned as a prerequisite to 'Advanced Topics in Human Resources' (HRM478) course, and this – in the panel's view – is not enough. Therefore, the Panel recommends that this issue should be

addressed. The Panel notes that the programme in general covers theoretical and practical intellectual aspects; however, it emphasizes the theoretical aspects more than the applied ones. This was confirmed during interviews with the students. Therefore, the Panel advises the Department to enhance further the applied aspects of the programme. Nonetheless, the Panel appreciates that the programme covers, in general, the theoretical and practical knowledge, subject specific and general skills and provides logical progression of courses and over years.

2. 3   The course specification of the programme courses are documented and they include the course aims and objectives, the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), content, teaching and learning and assessment methods, references to be used, and the course prerequisites. The Panel examined the course specification and course files for the academic years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 and the references used in these courses including the electronic ones. An improvement was noticed in the level of course files and course specification for the academic year 2013-2014. However, the Panel noted that some course specification, especially those that were not taught in the academic year 2013-2014, do not include the learning and teaching methods used. The Panel advises the College to update all course specification. Nonetheless, the Panel noted the faculty members' effort in developing course handouts and the use of different recent resources including the English ones, to substitute the lack of current Arabic resources. The Panel appreciates that the course contents, in general, meet the programme needs.

2. 4   The programme has specified Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that include knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, thinking skills and other skills. The Panel examined the PILOs and found that these are in general linked to the programme aims and are appropriate to a bachelor degree of human resource management. The Panel noted the skills related to the outcome (C1) 'applying the topics related to human resources such as marketing, organisational theories, accounting, and financial administration tools in business organizations. The Panel is of the view that this outcome will be more relevant to the programme if these examples are replaced by examples more related to human resources such as compensation and salary management. In addition, the Panel notes that the programme aims include 'emphasis on organisational human resources ethics, and it was confirmed, by examining the course contents and course specification, and during interviews with faculty members and students, that this aim is achieved by the programme itself. However, the PILOs lack explicit learning outcome that supports this aim. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College introduce an outcome to serve the programme aim of focusing on work ethic.

2. 5   There are Course Intended Learning Outcomes for each course and they are documented in the course specification. These CILOs are mapped to PILOs using the skills map of the study plan. The Panel studied the CILOs, and noted that the majority

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of these outcomes are appropriate and aligned to the level of the course and its content. However, as stated earlier, the Panel found some variation between some course outcomes stated in the skills map and those outcomes presented in the course specification such as in the case of 'Statistics' (Math105) and 'Economics' (ECO105) courses. Moreover, on scrutinising the programme skills map, it became evident to the Panel that more accuracy is needed in this regard. For example, the map does not illustrate how the course 'Leadership and Management Communication' (MGT220) contributes to the outcome 'communicate with others effectively with regard to human resource management in business organizations'. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Department review the programme skills map to ensure that all courses are mapped appropriately to the PILOs.

2. 6   The BHRM programme includes practical training course which consists of three credit hours after the student finishes 60% of the programme requirements where the student has to complete 200 hours of actual training in a job related to the programme specialisations. Moreover, there are documented policy and procedures for the training; however, the academic supervisor's role identified in these procedures is restricted to the student's final report evaluation. The internship policy does not explicitly stipulate practical supervision other than maintaining the relation between the student and his academic supervisor as stated in the 'Guidelines for Trainee Students' annexed to the policy itself. The policy does not stipulate that the academic supervisor should visit students during the training period, or directly communicate with the industrial supervisor. Whilst the Panel notes that the training course is included in the skills map of the study plan for the programme, the Panel did not find detailed course specification for the practical training course that includes the CILOs and their assessment. The Panel recommends that the College develop clear specifications for the practical training course, which specifies the course ILOs with evaluation methods to assess students' acquisition of these outcomes during the training period.

2. 7   The Teaching Manual includes the university's teaching and learning policies and the intended goals for the period 2011-2015, which indicate the use of a variety of teaching and learning methods. The Panel examined the course specifications and course files and noted that these include learning and teaching methods appropriate for the course level and contents and for the intended outcomes. During the interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that students are assigned group and individual tasks to ensure the achievement of the programme learning outcomes. Moreover, interviewed students praised the support they receive from faculty members to carry out their research projects. In addition, the SER and interviewed faculty members, referred to self-learning encouragement, by using e-learning, through 'Moodle', as a tool to enhance the leaning process in GU. The Panel appreciates that courses in

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general include learning and teaching methods that vary according to the nature of the course.

2. 8   There are formal assessment policy and procedures in place for evaluating students' achievement by faculty members that include grading criteria to ensure fairness of grades allocation. The assessment policy stipulates providing students with immediate feedback on their performance in mid-semester examination. The Panel, during interviews with faculty members and students and by reviewing course files and examination papers, confirmed that feedback is available on most of students' works, with a few exceptions related mainly to non-specialized courses, and these should be addressed. Mid-semester and final examinations are managed by GU's Central Committee using mechanisms that ensure fairness; such as 'blind marking'. These procedures are presented in the Teaching Manual. Moreover, the Panel came to know during interview sessions with faculty members that course instructors evaluate students' understanding of the contents of their research papers, and use software systems to ensure that submitted students' researches are free from plagiarism. In addition, there is an appeal policy and it was evident during interviews that students are aware of the procedures. The Panel appreciates that there are clear assessment policies and procedures, which are known to faculty members and students. However, the Panel notes that all courses follow the same marks distribution scale – as stated in the SER – allocating 10% of the total mark for class participation, 10% for assignments, 10% for quizzes, 30% for the mid-semester examination and 40% for the final examination. The Panel is of the view that in majority of academic programmes, there is some freedom for the faculty member with regard to marks distribution within the scope of the programme objectives. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College revise the marks distribution according to the course type and its ILOs.

2. 9   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Learning Programme, the Panel notes, with *appreciation*, the following:

- The Bachelor of Human Resource Management programme has clear aims that are in line with the university mission, the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences' mission and objectives as well as the department's objectives.
- In general, the programme covers the theoretical and practical knowledge, subject specific and general skills and provides logical progression of courses and over years.
- The course contents - in general – meet the programme requirements.
- The course specifications include learning and teaching methods, which vary according to the nature of the course
- There are clear assessment policies and procedures that are known to faculty members and students.

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2. 10   In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- review all documents of the programme to ensure that they are all consistent with the latest changes in the programme
- introduce a programme intended learning outcome about human resources ethics in line with the programme aims
- review the skills map of the programme to ensure that all coursers are linked appropriately to the programme intended learning outcomes
- develop an accurate course specification for the practical training course which specifies the course intended learning outcomes along with assessment methods to evaluate students' acquisition of these outcomes during the training period
- revise the current marks distribution according to the type and level of each course and its intended learning outcomes.

2. 11   **Judgement**

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

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3.   Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

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

3.2   The admission records submitted with the additional evidence martial reveal that admission scores range between the lower within the average of 50s and few scores within the average of 80s or higher. In addition, students transferred from another university which was closed and its students were distributed to a number of universities in Bahrain, joined GU, of whom 14 students joined the BHRM programme. Students' transcripts indicate that students who have been accepted through the orientation programme with high school score of less than 60% are usually unable to improve their level, and they continue being 'at-risk' students for a long period. In addition, the placement test analysis that was conducted at the college level in May 2015 indicates that students who scored less than 65% in the computer placement test, and consequently had to study the orientation course 'GCIS5011', lag behind their colleagues who were not required to study this course, with great variation (63% *vs*. 37%). The results of mathematics and English placement test, however, differ as students of both categories perform equally in mathematics, whereas those who studied English in the orientation programme perform better than their colleagues who entered the programme directly. This raises a question regarding the level of English language for those who are admitted directly in the programme. The Panel is of the view that even if the admission requirements are clear, there is a need to revise the criteria that allow a student to proceed from the orientation stage to the specialisation programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College revise the minimum score requirements for English language in the admission requirements and the content of the orientation programme courses to ensure that its outcomes

qualify students to join the programme at a level appropriate to the needs of the programme.

3.3   The SER refers to clear lines of responsibility and accountability regarding the management of the programme. The decision-making process starts from the Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally reaches the University Council for approval. The Head of the Department (HoD), in collaboration with the programme coordinator, is the person-in-charge of the programme management, whereas the Dean is responsible for following up the HoD's performance to assure the effectiveness of the educational process in the College. During the site visit, it was evident that the hierarchy and lines of responsibility are followed by the Department, with some flexibility due to the small size of the institution. This was confirmed by the reports, minutes of meetings, and decision-making processes. This hierarchy and the small size of the institution have contributed to the smooth run of the management process, especially with a large number of the academic staff having administrative and academic responsibilities at the same time, enabling them to understand the procedures. The Panel appreciates the organisational structure adopted in managing the College and the programme as well as the evaluation and accountability systems followed.

3.4   Overall, the faculty members' qualifications and expertise are appropriate to the BHRM programme aims and its delivery. The Panel confirmed the level of these qualifications by reviewing the CVs of all faculty members and found them appropriate for the requirements of the programme. In terms of number, and considering the decrease in the number of admitted students, there is a sufficient number of faculty members compared to that of students; there are 21 faculty members teaching 62 students enrolled in the programme. While taking into consideration that these faculty members also participate in teaching other programmes, the Panel is of the view that their number is still adequate for the requirements of the programme. Nonetheless, on examining the teaching load of the faculty members, the Panel noted the majority of the faculty have teaching loads that are very close to the maximum load prescribed by the HEC (5 courses). This is because students are distributed into teaching sessions spreading throughout the weekdays, with some of them attending in the morning; others in the afternoon and a third group are weekend students, in addition to the courses required for some of the graduating students. For this reason, the teaching load is on the high side with less opportunity for faculty members to engage in research and self-development activities. Although the College supports research by providing grants for those who publish their work in refereed journals, the research outcome remains modest and limited to a small number of the faculty members. The Panel recommends that the College rationalise the teaching load of its teaching staff and provide them with more time to engage in research and professional self-development activities.

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3.5   The SER indicates that the University has clear recruitment procedures that are implemented. The HoD, Dean and university President decide on hiring new faculty members based on recommendations made by a committee composed of the HoD, Dean and a faculty member from the Department. Vacancies are advertised on the university website. In its search for new faculty members, the University also considers personal recommendations from those who know some applicants, leaving general advertisements aside. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to circulate its academic posts vacancies more widely such as in specialised journals to ensure more transparency and attract a variety of distinguished and qualified staff. The Panel members had the opportunity to examine documents related to applicants' evaluation and the attached recommendation reports on their appointment. Faculty members' performance is evaluated by the HoD and students, who provide their feedback on the quality of teaching through the 'Course Evaluation Form'. From site visit interviews and evidence provided, the Panel confirmed that these procedures are understood by all concerned parties and they are in place. The Panel also studied the faculty retention rates in relation to the number of students, and notes that these are appropriate to the status of the programme. Moreover, there is a stipulated promotion policy for faculty members , which includes a set of criteria including research and community service, in addition to teaching and learning activities. This policy was developed based on the promotion policy of a local university. However, this policy was not in effect up to the date of this site visit, and the Panel encourages the College to implement it.

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

3.7   There are clear mechanisms to ensure the security and safety of students' records and information for which the University was awarded ISO270001 certificate. Moreover, there are procedures in place for conducting the examinations, recording grades, changing grades, confirming the academic status of the students and ensuring that graduate requirements are fulfilled, which give confidence to the results' integrity and

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reliability. This was confirmed by the campus tour and the panel's interviews with the relevant university staff, faculty members and students. The Panel appreciates that there are clear procedures in place to ensure the safety and security of information and the results reliability and accuracy.

3.8   The SER states that there are adequate facilities and a sufficient number of laboratories, which are available for students. The Panel toured the university facilities and noted that these are, in general, adequate for the programme needs and for the number of registered students. These facilities include teaching halls, computer laboratories and the library. The Panel visited the university library and noted the limited variety of learning resources for some subjects, as the majority of these are course textbooks. With regard to e-resources, there are three databases available; namely the Arab Administration Development Organisation (ARADO) which includes a limited number of resources on management and administration, especially those related to civil service in the public sector in the Arab world; 'Barcelona' database which includes many resources in academic fields, a few of which are in the Business field and 'Springer' database which provides many books and journals in the field of business administration. The Panel acknowledges that these resources are adequate to meet the basic requirements of the programme and encourages the College to expand the acquisition of learning resources and references relevant to the programme.

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

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

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

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

3.13   The site visit revealed that the general environment in the College is conductive. However, the decrease in the number of students in the University in general affects the overall academic atmosphere in the institution and student activities are decreasing. During the site visit, the Panel did not feel that there is a flourishing university life and did not find evidence of various students' activities and even some of the wall announcements seemed to be very old (existing for more than two years). During interviews with students, the Panel came to know that student clubs are suspended and activities are not scheduled, with the exception of some activities such as the football team participation in a championship organised by another private university. The Panel encourages the College to consider other ways for creating a

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supportive environment for informal learning, considering the small number of students.

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

- There is an organizational structure in place to run the College and the programme along with evaluation and accountably procedures.
- There are clear procedures for faculty members' recruitment and appraisal including students' feedback and these procedures are clearly and systematically implemented.
- There is a well-designed information management system (ARMS), which includes all reports the University needs to improve management and inform a proper decision making process.
- There are clear procedures to ensure the security and safety of information and the accuracy of consequent results.
- There is appropriate support provided for students with regard to their academic and social needs.
- There are arrangements in place to guide and advise newly admitted and transferred students, and these arrangements are effectively implemented.

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

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

3.16   **Judgement**

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

4.   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

4.1   The SER states that the academic standards of GU ensure producing graduates with attributes acquired during the study of the programme. The SER also states that the academic standards of GU intend to produce graduates capable of acquiring the PILOs including knowledge and understanding, programme-specific skills, analytic thinking and other transferrable skills. In this regard, the SER states that skills map exists to link the courses to the PILOs. Moreover, course aims, and learning and teaching methods support achieving the aims of the programme. The Panel confirmed that the skills map is comprehensive, although there is some discrepancies between the information presented in this map and the outcomes listed in the course specification of a few courses. However, the Panel notes that the skills map and teaching and learning tools in general enable students to acquire the fundamental skills required for the programme.

4.2   GU has a benchmarking policy that clearly stipulates the scope of benchmarking, the institutions with which GU intends to benchmark itself with, the procedures to be followed, the supporting documents and the reporting outlines. The policy encourages the College to conduct benchmarking activities in collaboration with the institutions against which the benchmarking activity will be carried out. In case of difficulties, however, the policy allows for conducting informal benchmarking by using the information available on the internet. The Panel recommends conducting formal benchmarking processes. The programme was benchmarked informally; using information accessed through the internet, with similar programmes offered by the University of London (UK), King Saud University (KSA), Al-Zarqa University (Jordan) and the University of Bahrain. The benchmarking reports dated 23 March 2014 addresses the programme components, number of credit hours, teaching and learning methods and assessment methods. The outcomes of these benchmarking activities were utilised by decreasing the number of total hours of the programme, introducing some core and elective courses and reviewing the ILOs. Although the Panel considers these activities positive steps, it notes that benchmarking is not utilised in enhancing the teaching and learning methods. In addition, these benchmarking activities overlooked learning resources, admission policies and student support and advising, although these are stated in the benchmarking policy. Moreover, the Panel confirmed during interviews that the course files were not subject to benchmarking. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College conduct formal benchmarking processes, in accordance to the university policy, and they should not be restricted to the programme structure and the study plan.

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4.3   GU has clear assessment policy and procedures as stated in the Faculty Members Manual. GU's Examination Committee is responsible for the control and implementation of the examination process. The Committee has constructed detailed examinations instructions for the academic year 2010-2011 based on the assessment policy and procedures, and these instructions are still in effect. They include examination halls, marks distribution, awarding and entering grades, examination questions instructions and other organisational aspects and it was confirmed that these instructions are put in place, especially with regard to the operation mechanisms. Moreover, the SER states that marks distribution in each course is communicated to students, and this was confirmed during the site visit interviews. In addition, students' course evaluation includes a question on fairness of assessment. The results of students' survey on assessment policies indicate their satisfaction with the examinations policies and procedures. During the site visit, the Panel came to know that the Department and College Councils review the marks of all courses of the programme before their approval, and that was verified during the site visit and through the minutes of meetings of the Department and College Councils. The Panel appreciates that there are clear assessment procedures, which are implemented and students' satisfaction with the assessment policy is measured. Moreover, the SER indicates that assessment policies are subject to regular reviews; for example, the College approved the amendment in assessment methods by eliminating the 5% allocated for attendance and including it within the class participation score. The Panel is of the view that this is a positive step to improve the assessment process. The Panel confirmed by reviewing the course files, that this amendment was implemented during the last semester. The SER also indicates that the external examiner reviews the programme as a whole, including the transparency and adequacy of the assessment process in the programme. In addition and as mentioned under Indicator 1, there are procedures relating to students' appeals, and the Panel noted that there is a high percentage of appeals that resulted in grade change. This issue needs to be investigated to find the reasons behind it. Moreover, the SER indicates that examination papers are moderated internally by an internal moderator and the HoD, and assessment methods are reviewed to ensure its alignment with the ILOs. Furthermore, the SER states that the Department and College Councils review the grades of each course before approving them. Moreover, marks distribution is well known by students and also presented in the Academic Guidance Manual. The Panel noted that the assessment methods and the weight of each assessment tool are included in the course specification of some courses. However, on reviewing the course files, it was noted that marks distribution is not included in a few courses. The Panel is of the view that marks distribution should be an integral part of information provided in the specification of each course as it is important for students.

4.4   GU has an internal and external moderation policy, by which it is ensured that assessment tools are aligned to the ILOs for which students' acquisition is to be

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assessed. The SER indicates that examination papers are reviewed internally by the internal moderator and the HoD to verify the assessment tools and their alignment with the ILOs. The SER also indicates that the Department Council and the College Council verify the marks of all courses before approving them. Moreover, the Quality Assurance Centre (QAC) reviews course files to ensure assessment alignment with the ILOs and submits reports in this regard. By examining the course files, it became evident that they include examination checklists. The course files also include matrices that map the assessment tools (examinations, projects and assignments) to the CILOs. The Panel observed some variation between course maps and the assessment tools used, where some outcomes were not assessed in the same way stipulated in the assessment map; however, the mapping is generally done appropriately. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to assess alignment of assessment tools to the ILOs, as will be discussed in the coming paragraphs of this Report.

4.5   As stated earlier, GU has an internal moderation policy that stipulates assigning an internal moderator for each course. This policy was implemented for all courses in 2014. According to the policy, the internal moderator compares the examination questions with the course specification and CILOs, before the scheduled examination date, to ensure their alignment, in addition to determining compliance of assessment tools in terms of the quality of questions, their design and clarity, marks distribution and ability to assess various levels of students. The moderator submits his feedback in a form especially designed for this purpose and the course instructor is expected to implement the required changes in the examination paper, which is approved by the HoD. The presence of internal moderators' forms was confirmed by reviewing the provided course files. The Panel noted, however, that all the provided forms indicate that assessment criteria are met, and that examination questions are aligned to the proper ILOs in all cases. The Panel enquired about this matter during interview sessions and was informed that the course files include the final checklist, and some amendments are made before reaching the final version of the examination, yet these amendments are not recorded. The Panel is of the view that it is important to record all amendments and changes made based on the internal moderation process; otherwise, the process would be just a formality as it is now. The internal moderators also report on the fairness of marks on marked papers and the Panel noted that these reports focus on marks rather than the examinations content and quality of feedback. The Panel recommends that the College document the changes made based on the internal moderation, and evaluate the effectiveness of the internal moderation process applied by the programme.

4.6   According to the external moderation policy, the external examiner of the programme reviews and verifies the students assessment processes, and then submits his report after reviewing a sample of marked examination papers to ensure the integrity of

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examinations and the marking process. However, this policy was not put in place until the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, which is the semester in which the site visit took place. Consequently, the Panel was not able to determine the effectiveness of its implementation. Although no formal policy for external moderation existed before the academic year 2014-2015, the College used external examiners for the programme to make sure that examinations are robust, in addition to the evaluation of other aspects of the programme such as the programme structure and content, as well as teaching and learning methods. The Panel encourages the College to continue applying the external moderation policy adopted by the University, and evaluate the effectiveness of this process.

4.7   Faculty members employ different assessment tools such as quizzes, mid- semester and final examinations, individual and group reports, exercises, home assignments, office tasks and class participation. This was confirmed during interviews with the faculty members, students and graduates of the programme. Moreover, the Panel reviewed a number of course files and examined samples of students' marked work such as assignments, examinations and worksheets, and found that they are, in general, appropriate to the level of the courses and their CILOs. The sample revealed that there is no inflation in the marks and that assessment methods and students' level are comparable to what is expected in similar courses. The Panel also found evidence that the employed assessment tools measure students' analytic ability and their higher order thinking skills as well specialization skills by presenting and discussing group an individual studies and by using case studies in students' work in the specialization courses such as (HRM201) and (HRM476). Specialization courses differ from the department courses in that the former provide more comprehensive and appropriate feedback about students' work. The Panel appreciates the variety and consistency of students' work assessment and the feedback provided to students, especially with regard to the specialization courses.

4.8   The SER indicates that internal and external mechanisms are utilised to ensure that the level of students' achievement meets the minimum level required for the programme. By reviewing the additional supporting documents provided during the site visit, it was confirmed that some mechanisms (such as internal and external moderation of assessment) are in place to ensure that the students' level meets the requirements of the programme. By reviewing the course files, it became evident that there is a fair marks distribution without significant inflation in these marks. In addition, grades are approved through a consistent process with a number of fixed approval levels that are reliable. The SER states that the Advisory Board plays a vital role in evaluating graduates' achievement, which the Panel confirmed during its meeting with the Board members. In general, the Panel appreciates that the level of students' achievements is consistent with the aims and ILOs of the programme. However, the Panel notes that the minimum score required to pass a course is 50%. Therefore, the Panel recommends

that the College, when conducting programme benchmarking (Paragraph 4.2), revise this minimum score to be consistent with the minimum score required to pass a course in other universities adopting similar credit hours system.

4.9   The SER refers to a regular study of admitted cohorts, including the ratio of admitted students to those who completed the programme successfully and the dropout and progression rates. The data on the length of study, GPA, minimum and maximum grades stated in the SER are acceptable, while the retention rate is less than expectable. The Panel was provided with some statistics that link between students' scores on admission and their accumulative GPAs in the programme; however, there was no evidence on the use of these statistics. From the data presented, it can be concluded that students admitted directly to the programme or transferred from other universities with low GPAs struggle with progressing in the programme. Nevertheless, the data on the length of study and progression rates is acceptable, whereas the retention rate calls for improvement.

4.10   The study plan of the BHRM programme includes a practical training course (HRM403), offered according to a documented policy and requires student to complete 200 hours of actual practical training in an organisation. Students' performance in this course is assessed by the industrial supervisor, academic advisor and a discussion committee. Students' marks are distributed as 40% by the industrial advisor, 30% for the academic supervisor and 30% by the discussion committee. During interviews with faculty members and students, it was confirmed that the procedures stated in the practical training policy are in place. In addition, the course files, which were made available during the site visit, indicate that there is an administrative follow-up and communication between the Department and the training organization. However, a weakness was noted in this communication with regard to following up students' achievement and progress over the various stages of the training process. This was confirmed during the site visit, where interviews with students and faculty members revealed that students' follow-up during the training period might not be actual or effective, as it is often carried out by phone. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College revise the mechanism used in implementing the practical training course to ensure real supervision of the content of the course and methods of assessment.

4.11   The SER indicates that there is department Advisory Board, which was established in 2009 and consists of faculty members and experts from various fields. Moreover, a student representative also attends the Board meetings. The Board regularly participates in the programme reviews and in enhancing best practices beside its role in identifying and developing the list of the programme elective courses, as it was evident in the Board's minutes of meetings. The Advisory Board reports included in the supporting materials provided indicate the utilization of the Board's feedback in key decisions taken during the review of the programme. The Panel met the external

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board members and confirmed its effective role and its composition of individuals who are influential in the labour market. The Panel appreciates the effective role of the department's Advisory Board.

4.12   The SER indicates that the Department collects feedback from employers and alumni to assess the knowledge and skills gained by its graduates and the extent to which these skills and knowledge are utilised. During the site visit, the Panel studied the results of the alumni's and employers' surveys. The results of the alumni's surveys indicate their satisfaction with the programme, whereas the employers' satisfaction was surveyed for one time only. While there are evidence on the alumni's satisfaction, there is no sufficient evidence to indicate employers' satisfaction. The Panel is of the view that the College should measure the graduates and employers' satisfaction towards the programme regularly and continuously (Paragraph 5-8).

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

- There are clear assessment mechanisms in place that are continuously reviewed, and students' feedback is taken into consideration.
- Various assessment tools are used and appropriate feedback is provided on written students' work, especially in the specialization courses of the programme.
- In general, the level of students' achievements is consistent with the programme aims and intended learning outcomes.
- There is an active Advisory Board, which provides useful feedback utilised in the development of the programme.

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

- conduct formal benchmarking in line with the university policy, which is not limited to the programme structure and study plan, and includes benchmarking of the minimum pass score in the courses
- document the changes and amendments resulting from the internal moderation process, and evaluate the effectiveness of this process
- review and revise the implementation mechanism adopted for the practical training course to ensure real supervision on its content, level of implementation and assessment methods.

4.15   **Judgement**

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

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.

5.1 The University has clear policies to manage the programme, and the SER states that hard copies of these policies are circulated to the Deans, HoDs and other stakeholders, in addition to their publication on the university website. The SER also states that Academic Advising Manual is also published and circulated to all faculty members and is made available on the university website. The University also publishes the Student Handbook, which includes the guidelines and bylaws important for students. The Panel confirmed this information by examining the university website, the SER appendices, additional supporting evidence, as well as through interviews with the faculty members and students. The small size of the College makes it easy to disseminate these policies and procedures. The Panel confirmed that these policies are in place and that the QAC follows up their implementation. The Panel appreciates that policies and procedures necessary for the programme management are available, known to academic and administrative staff, and are applied in most areas.

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

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

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of academic programmes development, tracking the purpose of these activities, enhancing the quality culture, collecting data and information, assessing performance and documenting quality procedures. This was confirmed during site visit interviews and through the reports submitted to the Quality Assurance Centre by the college's coordinator. The Panel appreciates that there is a comprehensive system for quality assurance based on the QAC manual, which is subject to periodic reviews. The QAC, within the scope of its remits, collects data from all stakeholders engaged in the educational processes including faculty members, students and alumni. The Panel also notes that the University has clear procedures with regard to quality assurance, but these are not implemented systematically. This, in the panel's view, is due to the recent implementation of some of the important policies, many of which were not implemented until 2014, with a few before 2013. Therefore, the Panel recommends more accuracy and consistency in implementing the quality assurance policies and procedures.

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

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

5.6   The Quality Assurance Manual for the academic year 2013-2014 stipulates the programme review arrangements including procedures, templates and participating parties. The SER states that GU has been conducting annual reviews of its programmes since the academic year 2010-2011. The SER also indicates that the Department of Administrative Sciences has conducted an annual programme review that resulted in a self-evaluation report with an improvement plan, which was implemented in 2011-2012. The SER also states that an external reviewer has reviewed the programme in terms of structure, number of credit hours, assessment tools and students' work, to ensure they are equivalent to similar programmes offered by other intuitions locally,

regionally and internationally. Finally, the SER states that the department Advisory Board meets once every semester for the purpose of programme development. The Panel studied the programme review report dated 25 March 2013 and noted the effective contribution of the Advisory Board in this process. The Panel encourages the College to continue implementing its annual programme reviews.

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

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

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

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

5.10   The SER indicates that the University is well informed of the labour market needs through the Advisory Board feedback, employers and graduates' surveys, and available publications. The College benefitted from these resources by introducing new courses such as 'Supply Chain Management, 'Small Business Management, 'Innovation Management', 'Conflict Management and 'Change Management'. However, there are no detailed studies or reports on labour market needs and what changes have to be made at the programme level. When the Panel inquired about this aspect during site visit interviews, the reply focused on the role of the Advisory Board, which is not sufficient. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College adopt more scientific and formal methods and mechanisms to scope the labour market needs.

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

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

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

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

5.13   Judgement

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

6.   Conclusion

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

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Human Resource Management offered by the College of Administrative & Financial Sciences, Gulf University.

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