



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Higher Education Review Unit

Institutional Review Report

Gulf University
Kingdom of Bahrain

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1. The Institutional Review Process

The review of Gulf University, Bahrain (henceforth referred to as “GU” or the “University”) was conducted by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in accordance with its mandate to “review the quality of the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority” (Royal Decree No 32 of May 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009).

This Report provides an account of the HERU institutional review process and the findings of the Expert Review Panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), appendices (APs) and supporting materials (SMs) submitted by GU. The Report also takes into consideration the supplementary documentation requested from the institution, as well as interviews and observation made during the review site visit which was conducted on 21-24 June 2009.

2. Overview of Gulf University

Gulf University (GU) was established in 2001 under the name Gulf University College, which was later changed to Gulf University. The University is located at Sanad in the Middle Governorate of Bahrain. The campus currently comprises a three-story building and six smaller buildings in the neighbourhood.

GU consists of five Colleges, namely, College of Administrative and Financial Sciences; College of Engineering; College of Computer Engineering and Sciences; College of Law; and College of Education. There are fourteen academic departments within these five Colleges.

A large number of programmes, consisting of 18 Bachelor’s, 26 Master’s and 21 Doctoral degrees, are offered by the 5 Colleges of the University.

GU follows a ‘course’ system with two regular semesters (Fall and Spring) of 16 weeks each, and two shorter Summer semesters per year. The University offers what it terms “flexible schedules”, which are made up of evening and weekend classes, in addition to the regular day classes.

Headcount enrolment of GU currently stands at 2779, and primarily comprises students from Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf (GCC) countries. A large proportion of the student body (approximately 60%) is from Kuwait with some 20-25% from Saudi Arabia. The target enrolment is for 7000 students to be enrolled within 3 years.

GU is a dual-medium University, the languages of instruction being Arabic and English. Teaching in the College of Law and the College of Education is in Arabic; teaching in the College of Engineering and the College of Computer Engineering and Sciences is in English;

and teaching in the College of Administrative and Financial Sciences is in either Arabic or English, depending on the student's choice.

3. Mission, Planning and Governance

The Gulf University mission was developed by the President in 2001 and is contained in a document about enrolment growth figures, buildings, property acquisitions, expenditure control, and the shifting markets for Gulf University's academic programmes. The Panel heard in interviews that the Mission should be reviewed every 5 years but this has not yet occurred. For this Mission to serve as a platform for the development of the University, including its strategic planning, it needs to be more broadly promulgated so that it can be embraced by the academic and general community.

In examining the materials presented by the University the Panel did not find clearly documented strategies that would ensure the aspirations in the mission are met. The Panel encourages the institution to revise its Mission to ensure that it is relevant. GU also needs to ensure that the intentions of the Mission are understood and supported by a wide range of stakeholders internally and externally to the University. This will assure GU that the activities of the University are tightly focused and concentrated on achieving the Mission.

Recommendation -1

HERU recommends that Gulf University review its Mission in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and ensure there is good understanding and support for the Mission as the foundation and key driver of University activities.

The Panel noted that Gulf University is experiencing a period of very rapid growth that is transforming a small proprietary institution into a potentially influential private University serving the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Gulf region. But to realise its ambitions, Gulf University needs to make substantial investments in developing its academic governance, strategic planning, and quality assurance policies. The University also needs to review its methods of managing the institution to ensure that academic and administrative staff are empowered to take leadership for areas under their control. A discussion of these areas follows.

The Panel is concerned about the lack of an appropriate and active governance structure. The President appointed the Board of Trustees in November 2008. The Panel was informed, during interviews, that the Board had not held a meeting as of the time of the site visit. All

governing practices are conducted through the President as the owner of the University. This approach is unsustainable in the longer term and does not correspond with good practice in institutional governance. Transparent and robust governance processes such as exist in corporate entities internationally (including in the higher education sector) need to be introduced into Gulf University. The Panel encourages the institution to activate the Board of Trustees and ensure that it meets regularly to fulfil its role in setting University strategy, and monitoring the quality of the University in its core functions. The University also needs to ensure that the governance structures demonstrate a clear separation of management and governance functions with articulation of the boundaries and different accountabilities in these areas clearly documented and disseminated.

Recommendation -2

HERU recommends that Gulf University activate the Board of Trustees and ensure that they meet regularly to discharge their responsibilities for governance of the University.

Recommendation -3

HERU recommends that Gulf University ensure that there is a clear separation of governance and management functions with clear articulation of the boundaries and different accountabilities.

With its stated ambition to become an internationally recognised University, GU needs to develop a robust process that will assure all stakeholders that the institution is observing the norms and protocols that have become standard across higher education worldwide. One of the first requirements is the development of a mechanism for the University Council to provide assistants to the President in the management of the University's operating units. A University-wide body focused on oversight of the academic aspect of the University could have any one of a number of titles (for example, Academic Board, Academic Council) and should draw its members from faculty, students, and senior managers/leaders (Vice President for Academic Affairs, Deans, and Heads of Department). This new body would receive input on academic matters from the college and departmental councils currently in existence and have direct responsibility for assuring the processes by which degrees and certificates are awarded including the monitoring of lists of potential graduates to ensure all academic requirements have been met. This body would also have influence over the definition of processes by which faculty are appointed, evaluated, and promoted, and the processes by which the curriculum is reviewed and revised. In short, this body would be the custodian of the academic activities and integrity of the institution.

The procedures conducted by any new academic body must be open and transparent with regular meetings, and its deliberations documented and made available to the University community on a regular and timely basis. Among other tasks, this body should also be responsible for ensuring the consistent implementation for the suite of policies and regulations governing academic conduct and administrative operations that were described in the SER. The existence of this body would not undermine the currently constituted University Council or the authority of the President, rather it would be the key source of specialist academic advice in the University and would allow the senior executive to keep its focus on management aspects such as resourcing of academic programmes, staffing, financial matters and the development of the physical infrastructure. The establishment of this new academic body is discussed in more detail later in this Report.

The Panel found no evidence of arrangements to enable students to participate in decision-making through a student association or representation on relevant governance and management committees. The one structure representing students, namely the Gulf University Student Union (GUSU), is responsible only for social functions.

Recommendation -4

HERU recommends that Gulf University put in place appropriate mechanisms for including students in decision-making processes at various organisational levels.

In terms of University policy, the Panel noted that Gulf University has a suite of policies and regulations for academic conduct and administrative operations with a comprehensive document called Gulf University Policy document dated 2007. While these are consistent with the Higher Education Council licensing regulations, the Panel found little evidence that these policies were broadly understood or their procedures regularly used to make decisions or resolve disputes. In addition it was concluded that the staff and faculty were not consistently oriented to these policies and many were not aware of where to find them. The Panel urges GU to ensure that all staff members are familiar with the University's policies and procedures and to ensure that these are implemented consistently within the institution.

Recommendation - 5

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement its policies and procedures across the institution and develop a strategy to ensure staff awareness and understanding.

Given the largely informal and highly centralized nature of its decision making processes – and despite the explosive nature of its growth – GU has yet to make a sustained investment in long range strategic planning. While the Panel acknowledges the presence of the University’s current Mission statement, there was no evidence of any strategic planning to ensure the accomplishment of this Mission. The Panel is of the opinion that GU needs to develop and implement an effective strategic plan that has measurable outcomes and clear goals, key performance indicators (KPIs), allocated responsibility for achievement of specific goals, a process for periodic monitoring of progress against targets, and benchmarking of performance against other similar private universities in the Gulf region. This would provide the University with the opportunity to define its niche in the higher education sector in Bahrain as well as regionally, and will assist the institution in ensuring that desired graduate attributes are achieved.

Recommendation -6

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan accompanied with key performance indicators that is in line with the University’s Mission.

While there is no institutional-level strategic plan the Panel noted that the unit responsible for GU’s technology infrastructure has made an impressive start in the development of its own strategic planning process. This ICT plan documents both what has happened over the last five years and what needs to happen and at what cost over the next five years. Other administrative and academic units should take note of the ICT plan and consider the question ‘Can we be similarly detailed in our own planning for the future?’ Such planning should complement, as well as extend, the planning that now focuses on the GU enrolment growth figures, physical plant, property acquisitions, expenditure control, and the shifting markets for GU’s academic programmes. Equal attention needs to be paid to the kind of strategic planning that will assist GU in rationalizing its curricular programmes particularly those for post-graduate students, development of new programmes, and discontinuation of poorly-delivered or under-subscribed academic programmes. Once those planning efforts are in place it should then be possible for GU to develop a relevant set of KPIs as well as institutions against which GU can legitimately be compared for purposes of benchmarking. Finally, the development and maintenance of a comprehensive risk register becomes possible once strategic planning and a Quality Assurance framework are in place.

GU might be described as a developing institution with an underdeveloped management structure and culture giving rise to communication problems between different units within the institution. The President has an advisory team – the University Council – which assists

her in decision-making. In the Panel's view GU needs to introduce regularly scheduled meetings not only for the University Council but at every management level of the institution as the current approach is very patchy in terms of coverage, regularity and reporting. Those meetings need to produce minutes that are appropriately distributed. GU also needs a continuing process for the collection and distribution of data tracking, for example on GU's changing demographics as well as the production of regular financial reports.

The institution manages its budget and expenditure largely by placing all responsibility for expenditures in the hands of the Assistant President for Administration and Finance and the Head of Accounting. The Panel understands that GU has a system for controlling expenditure and avoiding budget overruns but the current system depends on the ability of GU's most senior managers, along with the Head of Accounting, to approve and track all expenditures no matter how small or trivial. Deans do not have budget responsibility nor do they, or heads of administrative departments, receive monthly summaries of the funds that have been expended. In other words, there is no widely-shared responsibility for oversight of the operating budget.

GU could consider introducing a system of shared responsibility in which the Deans, in particular, are given annual expense budgets which they can track, control and manage. But, regardless of the approach that GU chooses for the future management of finances, the Panel encourages the University to give adequate delegation of authority and control of the budget to those in charge of the delivery of programmes and services. This will ensure that programme offerings are appropriately resourced and so contribute to the quality of the learning programmes.

Recommendation -7

HERU recommends that Gulf University give adequate delegations authority and control of the budget to the Deans so that they are empowered to lead and manage their colleges effectively.

4. Academic Standards

GU states that the programmes in each of its Colleges are structured "in a way that is similar to the programmes in international universities and other universities in the region, and to satisfy the requirements set out in the HEC regulations". The Panel learned that GU follows a "credit hours system", with credit hours in the undergraduate programmes ranging from 135–153 credit hours, except for Architectural Engineering which consists of 170 credit hours; Master's programmes comprise 36 credit hours of course work and 6 credit hours of

thesis; and Doctoral programmes comprise 78 credit hours of course work and 12–16 credit hours for thesis. The Panel noted that GU uses a “course numbering system” to indicate progression through programmes.

Scrutiny of examples of “Programme Specs” provided during the site visit revealed that some programmes do not accord with these general specifications. For example, the Doctor of Philosophy in Civil Engineering was found to comprise 15 “compulsory” credits, 21 “elective” credits, and 18 credit hours for theses, while the Doctor of Philosophy in Electrical and Electronic Engineering consists of 15 “compulsory” credits, 27 “elective” courses and 18 credit hours for theses. At the undergraduate level, the Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering was found to consist of a total of 133 credit hours. The Panel urges the University to address these inconsistencies and contradictions.

Recommendation -8

HERU recommends that Gulf University address with urgency the discrepancies between the actual credit hours of its offered programmes and the general specification of the credit hour range adopted by the University.

At present the University does not have a system for ensuring industry or other external input to course development and review. There was evidence that the practice of getting formalised input from external sources such as industry or professional bodies, was not embedded although the SER described some informal interaction with local organisations particularly in relation to the current employers of GU students and the locations of students undertaking field training. GU needs to ensure that there is external input to its programmes to ensure these are relevant to industry and the needs of the Bahraini workforce.

Recommendation -9

HERU recommends that Gulf University involve external stakeholders, such as employers, industry experts, professional bodies and academic peers from other universities, in the development and review of all its programmes to ensure currency and relevance to the labour market.

The Panel established from the SER, its supporting documents, and during interviews with faculty and students, that GU has clearly stated admission criteria for all of its programmes. An admission test in English, Mathematics and Computer Literacy or Arabic is administered to all applicants. As stated on the GU website, the entry requirement for admission to

Bachelor programmes is “70% and above in the high school certificate” or “a score of 5.0 with no band score of less than 4.5 in the IELTS”. Applicants with less than 70% grades at high school are required to attend an “orientation programme” consisting of English, Mathematics and Computer Literacy. In addition, GU has regulations and procedures for the administration of credit transfers. The Panel heard that applicants for credit transfers are required to have a GPA of not less than 2.0.

In terms of the GU Language Policy, programmes in Law and Education are presented in Arabic, programmes in Engineering are presented in English, and programmes in Administrative and Financial Sciences are presented in either English or Arabic, depending on the students’ choice. Students are required to pass Level 2 of the English Placement Test before they are allowed to enrol for a subject that is offered in English.

The Panel established that GU has no Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) arrangements beyond the recognition of credits from other institutions. The Panel finds that this is a rather limiting conceptualization of the concept of RPL.

While the Panel found the stated admission criteria in the respective academic programmes to be adequate, it nevertheless did not find any systematic mechanism for the review of the criteria, or for an evaluation of the extent to which the criteria have been useful determinants of success in the programmes. The University needs to ensure that this matter is dealt with by a committee at University or College level.

Recommendation -10

HERU recommends that Gulf University establish an appropriate mechanism at University level for the systematic review and evaluation of the effectiveness of the admission criteria in all programmes.

GU has established agreements and MOUs with some international universities. A careful scrutiny of the documents showed that the MOUs merely exist on paper and have not been used for purposes of enhancing the quality of delivery, or for benchmarking GU on academic standards; nor have they been useful for facilitating student or staff exchanges. The Panel would like to encourage GU to seek appropriate ways of giving practical effect to these agreements.

Recommendation -11

HERU recommends that Gulf University seek appropriate ways of ensuring that the agreements and Memoranda of Understanding it has entered into with other universities are

used effectively to enhance the design, delivery and quality of its programmes as well as the quality of the student experience.

The Panel found that the GU *Flyer* has the caption “*Gulf University: Working together with the University of London, British, American and Canadian Universities*”. The Panel found that this statement is misleading as no such universities are actually involved in the design and delivery of any of the current GU programmes.

Recommendation -12

HERU recommends that Gulf University refrain from the use of any statements inferring that “the University of London and other British, American and Canadian universities” are currently involved in the design and delivery of its programmes.

The Panel learned from the SER and the examples of “Programme Specifications” that learning outcomes are stated for the undergraduate programmes. These are formulated to indicate both general and the specific skills, with a clear indication of the relevant knowledge and understanding as well as for cognitive skills. Course descriptions and syllabi that are made available to students, however, do not contain any indication of learning outcomes. The Panel also learned that learning outcomes have not yet been developed for the postgraduate programmes.

Recommendation -13

HERU recommends that Gulf University ensure the articulation of learning outcomes for all offerings, including postgraduate programmes and that course descriptions and syllabi made available to students specify the intended learning outcomes.

The Panel learned that GU has finalized a staff development programme that will focus on developing faculty skills in the writing of intended learning outcomes. Interviews with various categories of academic staff revealed that most faculty members, and more particularly part-time staff, are unaware of this programme. The Panel urges the University to ensure proper dissemination of information about this programme to all faculty members through the Professional Certification and Consultancy Centre (PCCC) and encourage faculty participating in the programme.

GU has a set of rules and policies on student assessment which includes rules for student appeals. The Panel found during interviews with academics that the policy is applied consistently across all Colleges and Departments, and also noted that GU does not have a method to ensure that assessment practices are appropriate to the stated outcomes of a course. It is doubtful that assessment tasks can be designed to measure the intended learning outcomes.

The Panel learned that GU does not have an internal or external moderation system in place, nor is there a method of monitoring fairness in the standards of marking of courses although there is a process for checking the accuracy of calculation of results for individual student examination scripts. In addition, “there is no external scrutiny or comparison of the relative academic standards achieved by GU undergraduate students”. The Panel heard only of isolated cases where Deans check the accuracy of recording of marks of faculty members. The Panel urges GU to institute procedures at all phases of the examination process to minimise errors and inaccuracies in published examination results.

Recommendation -14

HERU recommends that Gulf University introduce external moderation as part of its assessment system and in addition, implement mechanisms to ensure the internal validation and integrity of the examination process.

5. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The Panel heard during interviews with management that the purpose of a robust quality assurance process is, to make certain that the President’s commitment to quality evolves and infiltrates the operation so that there is a tangible and highly visible commitment to an institution-wide culture of quality. Quality assurance arrangements in the institution are at the early stages of development. While the Panel heard of the commitment to provide a quality education for the students it was unable to gain a sense that there is a shared understanding among management and other parts of the University of the meaning of ‘quality education’.

The Panel met with members of the Quality Assurance Committee and the newly appointed part-time head of the quality assurance unit. The Self-Evaluation Report described a practice whereby the person responsible for the Quality Assurance Unit meets informally every week with the President, the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Assistant President for Administration and Finance. There are, however, no records of the outcomes of these meetings or an indication of how follow-up action is monitored. Nor is there an overall strategic plan for embedding a quality culture institution-wide with KPIs and

collection of data to monitor the improvements. It was clear to the Panel that the University currently lacks the systematic approach to quality assurance that should be embedded in governance, management and administration functions as well as the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement activities. The Panel concurs with the GU that the University's "quality assurance processes should be strengthened and the university should pursue them relentlessly and continue to act on issues identified by these processes".

The preparation of the SER and the planning for the HERU review are important first steps in this regard. Likewise, the compilation of a quality assurance manual for Gulf University which was in process of being finalised at the time of the site visit is an important milestone. But, of themselves, these developments are not sufficient to engender a quality culture across the University. GU needs to commit fully to developing and sustaining a rigorous approach to quality and to involving the entire GU community in this endeavour. This needs to involve individuals at every level including the leadership of the University.

To achieve the goal of embedding a quality culture the University needs to develop its understanding of what "quality" means in a university and develop strategies to engage the GU community in making a realistic assessment of its quality position as opposed to what GU would like to think is its position on quality matters. In other words, the quality processes must take GU beyond the rhetoric of self-declared excellence to an assessment that is based on empirical data collected systematically on all aspects of its operations over time.

The role of the Quality Assurance Unit is particularly important. While quality assurance needs to be everybody's responsibility, the analysis of institutional level quality data would be undertaken by this body. The Panel agrees with the University that the quality assurance unit is understaffed and needs to be supplemented. More importantly it needs to have delineation of roles and responsibilities as well as tools to measure its performance.

Students are major stakeholders in any higher education institution. In order for their voice to be heard and interests taken into account, the Panel suggests that the institution should have students represented in the quality assurance process as well as on other committees that the institution establishes to manage the quality of provision across the University.

Interviews with various staff indicated that the current, limited implementation of quality assurance is understood as a developmental process and as such is a positive force for improvement. This understanding should be fostered as quality assurance grows and becomes more systematic so that it allows for, and encourages, critical reflection on the teaching, learning and assessment process. Furthermore, quality assurance needs to be understood as a mechanism for strengthening the academic endeavour and should not simply be focused on compliance with HEC regulations or HERU expectations.

Recommendation -15

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop a systematic and robust approach to quality assurance which is centred on continuous quality improvement rather than compliance and correction and is integrated with all aspects of the University including governance, administration and the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

6. Quality of Teaching and Learning

Gulf University does not have a fully-fledged academic governance and advisory infrastructure including a set of academic processes that are applied consistently for approval and review of programmes. The Panel was informed during interviews with staff that the majority of programmes have been in place since the establishment of the institution as part of the original suite of offerings.

Some specialisations, such as public relations and communication in the 2007-2008 period were added. The academic infrastructure that does exist consists of councils at departmental and college levels but these are at an early stage of development and do not keep full records of their academic discussions and resolutions. It was clear to the Panel, as mentioned above, that the University Council is primarily an advisory group assisting the President on a wide range of resource and management matters rather than a peak academic forum as implied in the diagram supplied by GU. Hence there is no structure of academic standing committees operating at the institutional level and that is independent of management for the consideration and approval of new programmes and courses and reviews.

Recommendation -16

HERU recommends that Gulf University formulate an institution-wide academic standing committee for the consideration of all academic matters including approval of new programmes and courses referred through the departmental and college councils.

GU has plans to develop templates for new programme development and re-approval and indicates it will follow HEC's requirements and guidelines for new programmes. There was evidence from interviews that the process of documenting courses according to the HERU template used for a recent HERU programme review was proceeding. The Panel agrees with GU that it needs to attend to the completion of this task. The Panel is of the view that

particular attention should be given to the matter of gaining external input to its programmes as this is fundamental both to ensure the quality of the programmes offered as well as to meet the University's aspirations to professional accreditation of its programmes. Also the University needs to focus on defining the learning outcomes for individual programmes and courses.

The Panel was informed during interview with academics that there are no general descriptions of individual courses available to students prior to registration although they also heard that faculty members will give an oral account of the content on request. The Panel suggests that the institution ensure that there is a standard overview for each course available to students (perhaps on the GU website) to enable them to learn about the content of individual courses prior to registration and to lessen the time demands on academic staff.

Academic review is an integral part of GU's comprehensive review process. There is a policy that states that matters such as teaching, learning and assessment are included in the scope of the academic review. Furthermore the academic review process consists of five phases beginning with a self-review performed by the academic unit. The review processes for programmes and curricula are biennial.

The Panel investigated the implementation of this academic review policy in terms of the review processes and the regularity and timing of reviews. The Panel could find no evidence that GU had ever followed the academic review process as outlined in the University policy document. In fact, staff and management indicated during interviews that that no Academic Review Committee has been established.

Programmes offered by GU do not go through regular external reviews other than those conducted by HERU. On the other hand, there was some evidence of internal reviews being carried out at GU. Some departments reported that they had not held reviews of all of their courses in the previous two years, contrary to claims in the SER. Other departments reported that they conduct programme reviews and the resulting changes are approved at the department level but not the College or University Council. Some Deans reported that programme changes are approved at the college level. The result of this variation is an unacceptable lack of consistency between departments in the processes and regularity of reviews.

Between December 2006 and March 2009 10 programmes matters were considered by the University Council. Three of the dates referred to the BSc and MSc programmes which were 'reviewed' by the University Council to allow the introduction of new specialisations. Changes to the PhD requirements were noted at 3 meetings. Although the Table suggests that the curricula of a number of programmes were reviewed and approved by the University in 2007/2008, the Panel remained unconvinced that these reviews were in accordance with stated policy or were robust with appropriate benchmarking and industry input.

In summary, no evidence was presented to give confidence that the University conducts thorough and regular reviews of its programmes. The Panel found that the University Policy related to establishing and publicizing of an academic reviews schedule has not been implemented.

GU needs to ensure that internal reviews of programmes and courses are carried out according to a schedule and a standardized academic approval process such as already outlined in the GU policy on reviews. It also needs to ensure that departmental reviews and changes to programmes are subject to scrutiny and ratification by the relevant college council which, in turn, should have responsibility for academic quality control and for forwarding the review to the next highest level of the academic governance structure, namely, the institution-wide academic advisory body.

Recommendation -17

HERU recommends that Gulf University implement systematic reviews of programmes and courses such as outlined in the Gulf University Policy document and include ratification by a university-wide academic advisory body.

The institution offers its programmes in three different attendance patterns: (i) regular sessions; (ii) weekend sessions; and (iii) two summer sessions. The Panel has no issue with the principle of weekend sessions as these can be effective when well-structured and managed. However, in the case of GU the Panel was concerned about the operation and contact hours of the weekend and the summer sessions. The number of taught hours scheduled in a short period over Thursday and Friday exceeds what is accepted as maximum effective class hours that enable student's conceptualization and active interaction and participation in the teaching and learning process. Further, if this pattern continues, the students will not have adequate opportunity to utilize the reconstituted library and other learning resources that are being suggested for introduction. The Panel encourages Gulf University to conduct a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the weekend attendance pattern as compared with the regular attendance pattern in achieving a quality of learning outcomes in the individual courses. The University needs to take into account the very different requirements to facilitate effective teaching and learning activities within concentrated timeframes. Simply compressing a standard programme into a shorter time span does not facilitate quality student learning.

Recommendation - 18

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop an appropriate teaching and learning strategy for weekend students that ensure that they have an equivalent and quality learning experience as the full-time students.

GU offers many postgraduate programmes and in 2008/2009 was offering 21 PhDs, and 26 different Master programmes. This large number of postgraduate programmes has led to negative consequences including high workloads for faculty members and difficulties for students in finding appropriate supervisors. This inevitably negatively impacts on the quality of these programmes.

The Panel considered the high number of postgraduate qualifications on offer and had some concerns about the infrastructure to support this number of postgraduate courses and students; for example, the computer to student ratio is poor and there are insufficiently resourced laboratories. Of even more concern to the Panel is the lack of policies and procedures to support the postgraduate endeavour, such as the lack of a policy on postgraduate supervision setting out the roles and responsibilities of both the supervisor and the student, and inadequate library resources to support postgraduate study.

Recommendation -19

HERU recommends that Gulf University review the number of postgraduate qualifications it offers to align with its capacity and infrastructure to support postgraduate courses and students.

The Panel noted that the University does not have a statement of philosophy to guide its approach to teaching and learning. The statement needs to be supported by a plan and should set out the main quality improvement priorities, resource requirements, timeframes and indicators of success for the colleges and University as a whole. This statement or plan should be devised as an instrument to ensure consistency of approach for quality assurance with measurable objectives, timeframes and accountabilities for aspects of implementation.

Recommendation -20

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop a statement of philosophy and a plan, to guide its approach to teaching and learning at an institutional level.

The Panel examined the statement of GU policy in the Student Manual regarding the allocation of marks for undergraduate courses. This is based on a standard allocation of marks namely 30% for class attendance, quizzes, assignments, and class discussion, 30% for mid-term examination, and 40% for the final examination. The Panel was concerned that this approach was a constraint on faculty as well as inappropriate for certain subjects where assessment needs to be tied to the desired learning outcomes rather than a pre-determined 'one size fits all' model. In addition the Panel heard from students that they considered the percentage allocated to classroom attendance and activities was not always fairly allocated as students in some courses received the full percentage amount regardless of their attendance.

In March 2009 the University Council approved a policy for allocating marks for graduate courses (10% for class attendance and discussion, 20% for report writing and research, 30% mid-term exam and 40% final examination). The Panel found this policy to be too restrictive and limits the ability of faculty members in using different assessment methods.

The Panel encourages GU to formulate a University assessment policy that addresses matters such as the form of assessment (e.g. criterion-referenced vs. norm referenced) and allows some flexibility with regard to the distribution of marks within courses. There is also a need to articulate clearly a policy for academic integrity to prevent plagiarism. There is currently no formalised process for informing students of the conventions of acknowledging sources or for dealing with deliberate plagiarism cases although plagiarism is cited as a ground for student discipline in GU Policy. The Panel heard that students found cheating at examinations receive a fail grade but can repeat the examination the following semester with no further penalty. The University might consider installing plagiarism detection software such as Turn-it-in which would require all students to submit work in electronic form where the requirements make this feasible.

Recommendation -21

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop, disseminate and implement a policy on assessment that allows for appropriate form of assessment and which includes processes for dealing with cases of plagiarism.

GU has a system of placing students in industry (internship) and there is a form which employers complete at the end of the placement. The final grade is based on this form and the submission of a student's report but there appears to be no faculty input to ensure

consistency in the grades being allocated by the employers. GU needs to develop its policy in this area and include it in its assessment policy. Furthermore, GU needs to review and assess the effectiveness of its internship programmes including the usefulness of the evaluation reports (by host trainers) and the possible use of these reports to inform programme development.

Recommendation -22

HERU recommends that Gulf University review and assess the effectiveness of its internship programmes.

Student satisfaction surveys are conducted at the final stage of most courses and the Panel examined a range of completed forms. They were informed that the Vice-President for Academic Affairs examines all of the forms and provides feedback to individual staff in cases where feedback is negative. There is currently no system of collating the data from the evaluations and providing this to all teaching staff or heads of department. The result is that staff who are performing well are unaware of the assessments made of their work by the students. However, the University does identify 'star' performers and these are acknowledged publicly at graduation ceremonies.

There is some evidence at GU of the international phenomenon of 'survey fatigue'. Where students are unable to see what has changed as a result of completing the forms, there is a tendency for many of them not to take too seriously the completion of the course evaluations. This tendency might account for the patterns of unusually high level of positive responses in the bundles of individual forms the Panel examined. In effect, the students appear to have filled the forms in automatically and without any real thought given to their responses. There was some indication that this was the case from a number of students interviewed especially undergraduate students. In addition, the Panel found no evidence that formal student feedback is used to make changes to programmes or teaching or to identify areas for staff professional development. A number of students reported their perception that the suggestion boxes are rarely opened. On the other hand, the Panel learned of instances where face-to-face feedback to the University was acted upon with non-renewal of contracts of staff members who were not effective in the classroom.

Recommendation -23

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a system of collating the data from student evaluations and provide the data to teaching staff and heads of department

so that all individual staff are aware of assessments made of their work by the students whether that is negative or positive.

The Panel agrees with the University that exit surveys need to be initiated and employment of graduates monitored as well as employer satisfaction with graduate skills and performance. It would be useful for GU to monitor graduate employment rates and students who continue to study. There is an opportunity to follow up alumni to seek their views on the appropriateness of the programmes as a preparation for work.

Recommendation -24

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop graduate, alumni and employer satisfaction surveys and utilise the results of these surveys to inform planning.

7. Student Support

GU maintains a management information system, called the Gulf University System (GUS), which is used to record students' information. The Registration Section is responsible for the management of the GUS and uses it in the provision of the core student administrative processes of admissions, enrolments and student records, collection of fees, ID card services, class timetabling and management of examinations, and graduation. The Admission section is responsible for student admission to graduation.

The Panel heard in interviews with management that the University has identified a number of deficiencies in the GUS system and that it is ineffective in providing management reports that could help in the identification of problems for purposes of making improvements. The Panel was informed that graduation requirements are currently manually checked and that the Colleges and academic departments are not able to use GUS for purposes of making timely academic interventions or for the maintenance of academic standards. As a result of these shortcomings the University has embarked on a process of installing a new management information system, a strategy the Panel supports.

Affirmation -1

HERU affirms Gulf University's efforts to implement a more effective management information system.

Gulf University has not yet built a mechanism to monitor and identify students who are at risk of failure. Moreover, even if a student 'at risk' is identified, GU does not have a formalised method for assisting them. The Panel suggests the University develop and implement policies and procedures to identify and support academically weak students.

Recommendation -25

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement policies and procedures to identify and support academically weak students.

The Panel notes that the University does not provide many of the student support services that are usual in a University of quality. These include: counselling, career planning, and health services.

Recommendation -26

The HERU recommends that Gulf University provide professional counselling, career planning and health services to students to contribute to their well-being and academic success.

The Panel noted during interviews with members of the Gulf University Student Union (GUSU) that there is no allocated budget to support its activities. This compromises the student learning experience as non-curricula campus activities are an important opportunity for individual development and contribute to the quality of the student learning experience. The Panel encourages GU to consider allocating a budget to the GUSU so that it can provide a range of activities for students.

Recommendation -27

HERU recommends that Gulf University allocate a budget to support the work of the Gulf University Student Union.

Interviews with academic staff and students confirmed that GU has an academic advisory system in place for advising students and prospective students on "progression and credit

transfer requirements". Study Plans are compiled for each student in order to facilitate the academic advisory process. The role of the advisor is prominent during the registration period when faculty members are required to sign the students' registration forms. The Panel was informed, through student interviews, that there are many cases where there is no follow-through on their concerns and they feel they have to rely on each other without timely academic advice on their pre-requisite requirement and optimum course pathways. This is seen by the Panel as an area for attention to ensure that the student advisers are active and accessible and that students know that they are the primary sources of authoritative information and advice on academic matters.

Recommendation -28

HERU recommends that Gulf University review its academic advising system to make it more consistent and accessible for students needing advice and information

Students reported problems with several aspects of the University's provisions. There was a widely-held perception that the University is very focused on meeting the needs of the Kuwaiti students who attend the weekend sessions. Parking is an issue, particularly at examination times, and there was a view that GU could provide shuttle-bus services from a central location at these, and ideally, other times also. The students also had strong views about what they considered to be high fees charged in the case of repeats of missed examinations. The Panel heard also that students wanted more flexibility in accommodating those who have genuine illness or work travel commitments interfering with their capacity to take examinations on the scheduled day. The Panel suggests that the institution investigate these concerns.

GU has an active Examination Department comprising 6 academic staff on a rotational basis and assisted by a part-time administrative staff member. The Department has a system for ensuring the security of examination papers and management of the completed papers. Although there is an expectation that faculty members will be present for the first 20 minutes of an examination the Panel heard that this practice is not always observed.

The Panel heard that all mid-term and final examinations are conducted centrally in the University Hall which is equipped with a camera and a "cell phone jamming system" to prevent cheating. While management and faculty appeared to place great faith in these mechanisms, the students interviewed were of the view that these have not been very successful in curtailing cheating in examinations and suggested that the cameras were not in working order. The University is encouraged to consider measures, such as the banning of cell phones from the examination venue and a review of the effectiveness of the camera

system as well as training in invigilation. It will be important to engage students in any review or development of strategies in order for the students themselves to have confidence in the measures taken.

Recommendation -29

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a system that ensures the integrity of examinations and in which students have confidence.

8. Human Resources

The University states that planning for human resources to fulfil its Mission is based on the expected student enrolment in programmes and services. It also states that it plans on the basis of internationally acceptable student: faculty ratio and those set by HEC. The Panel found that in the past two years there has been a large increase in students' population at GU and this has led to a significant decrease in faculty: student ratio in some colleges (e.g. faculty: student ratio at the College of Business Administration decreased from 1: 36.5 in 2006/2007 to 1: 57 in 2007/2008). The University acknowledges that there is a need to increase the number of faculty members and indicated that it was unable to hire more qualified faculty members due to the difficulties in getting the necessary approvals from the Ministry of Education. The Panel concurs with the University that there is a need to increase the number of administrative staff and technicians.

Affirmation -2

HERU affirms Gulf University's decision to appoint qualified staff and increase the number of administrative and technical staff.

The University indicated that it keeps records of staff turnover rates. These records were not available on request prior to the site visit but were prepared and supplied to the Panel during the Review Visit. The Panel suggests that GU continue to keep these records and review them periodically to inform its plan to retain suitably qualified staff.

The Panel was pleased to find that the academic staff are well-qualified with most holding doctoral degrees. The staff members met by the Panel were highly experienced, enthusiastic about their work and committed to the institution and the students.

Commendation -1

HERU commends Gulf University for its committed and well-qualified academic staff members.

While full-time staff members have access to University resources, some of the part-time staff are not provided with office space and access to computing facilities. Such staff have no official office hours. The Panel encourages the institution to ensure that part-time staff have the same access to University resources including offices spaces so that they can perform their duties in a way that contributes to a quality learning experience for students.

The filling of vacant faculty positions has, in recent years, been mainly through a process that relies heavily on the recommendations of GU faculty members who know qualified candidates in the required field of specialization. GU faculty members invite the candidates to submit their CVs to the University's administration. Interviews are conducted by telephone or face-to-face. But this may not be the best strategy for the longer term. The method can be effective and expedient but it does not necessarily identify the best candidates for a position nor does it ensure the diversity of backgrounds, age profile and experience that keeps an institutional culture renewed over a period of time. The Panel suggests the institution develop a recruitment policy that sets a process for recruitment, which is open and transparent. Head hunting should be at the end of the process not the first step.

There was no evidence that the University had implemented an effective system for induction for staff. Some of the administrative staff interviewed indicated that they did not have any orientation when they joined the University but some new faculty members reported that they had gone through informal inductions that included meeting with their heads of departments and / or faculty members in the same department who informed them about the University regulations and what is expected of them

Recommendation -30

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a systematic process for the induction of new staff.

There was no evidence to suggest the GU has a well-established institution-wide staff performance management plan. Many academic staff and heads of departments were confused about performance evaluation although it was suggested that a faculty evaluation

form had been introduced some 6 months before the review visit. The purpose of evaluation and the parameters considered in evaluation were not known to some of the rank-and-file staff members yet it appears that some form of staff evaluation is used as one of the factors determining the renewal of staff employment contracts. It was evident that GU needs to take action on performance evaluation as part of a staff performance management plan that also identifies staff development needs. In addition, GU needs to educate both individual staff members and supervisors in the effective use of performance strategies.

Recommendation -31

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a proactive approach to performance evaluation as part of a staff performance management plan that also identifies staff development needs.

The University states that it has a systematic and fair process for the investigation of complaints, grievances and appeals based on Ministry of Labour by-laws. However, the Gulf University Policy document does not include such a policy. The Panel was informed that the process has not been instituted nor were the staff aware of such a process. The Panel encourages the institution to develop the staff grievances and appeals policy and ensure that it is disseminated across the institution.

Recommendation -32

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop the staff grievance and appeals policy and develop a mechanism to ensure staff awareness of the policy.

The University does not have policies for staff development but it recognizes that its 'activities in this respect are not up to expectations'. GU indicated that it had worked on increasing the professional development activities this year and plans on increasing them in the future through the Professional Certification and Consultancy Centre (PCCC) which will offer courses in the second half of 2009. The Panel noted evidence that some staff are supported to attend conferences to keep up to date with their scholarly knowledge and to learn about innovation in teaching methods. It was not clear how many staff had taken advantage of this opportunity.

GU has largely relied on the backgrounds of the teaching staff who, as a whole, are well-qualified and experienced. However, the heavy teaching loads mitigate against innovation so it will be necessary for GU to ensure that all staff are enabled to keep up to date and take advantage of new teaching technologies and PCCC training. GU indicated that one of its planned improvements is to introduce a learning management system so it will be necessary

also to provide staff with access to technical expertise to exploit the new learning management systems and facilitate the introduction of teaching technologies into teaching and learning activities. The Panel advises the University to give strong support to the Professional Certification and Consultancy Centre to ensure that it is effective in its goal of conducting professional development programmes for the Academic and Administration Staff.

Affirmation -3

HERU affirms the establishment by Gulf University of the Professional Certification and Consultancy Centre which will provide professional development programmes for the Academic and Administration Staff.

GU does not have an academic staff workload allocation model that allows time for research, scholarship and other activities. The Panel noted that most of the faculty members are overloaded with teaching and that they are also expected to take on the roles of researcher, thesis supervisor, student advisor and, in many cases, fill a post of formal administrative positions. In this situation staff do not have sufficient time to conduct quality research or become involved in community activities. Many of the heads of departments and Deans face the same, or even more difficult, problem. On top of their heavy administrative workload, most, if not all, teach 7 courses, supervise graduate students, and endeavour to conduct their own research.

The Panel is of the view that the University is taking advantage of the flexibility implied in the Higher Education Council regulations with regard to teaching loads. The formula '5+2' is the legal maximum load for an individual academic and not the requirement for all academics. The Panel was informed that academic staff are paid for the additional two courses. Nonetheless, the GU interpretation of 5+2 negatively impacts on the quality of teaching and learning particularly as it requires many staff to attend the campus over 6.5 days per week and work long hours. A number of the faculty that have the kind of maximum assignments that now exist at GU necessarily develop coping strategies that include dismissing classes early, putting off the completion of research projects, spending less time with their thesis students, and/or not fully performing their administrative duties. There was some evidence that such strategies are used by some GU faculty.

To maintain the academic integrity of the University's operations, the Panel suggests that as a high priority the University needs to introduce a focused strategy for reducing teaching loads, providing release time to faculty members who are performing administrative tasks, engaging in major research projects, and/or engaging in community activities on behalf of the University. The Panel encourages the institution to review and monitor current staff

loads with due consideration being given to adjusting time allocation in the three core functions of teaching, research and community service. The goal is to ensure that quality of postgraduate supervision, research, and ongoing discipline-based scholarly activities.

Recommendation -33

HERU recommends that Gulf University review its current academic staff workload practices and introduce a carefully monitored workload policy that gives due consideration to time allocations for the three core functions of teaching, research and community engagement.

10. Infrastructure, Physical and Other Resources

The main campus consists of a relatively large area which houses most of the facilities of the University; two more neighboring facilities including a three-storey building and a group of six smaller buildings house the rest of the facilities. The Panel, in a tour of the facilities of the campus concurs with the University that the physical resources are limited and recognises that there is a master plan for development of the site to accommodate a total of 8000 students. The current facilities are under severe constraint to support adequately the offering of the large number of academic programmes, including teaching and learning spaces, library, ICT facilities and appropriate spaces for the academic advising and support of students.

GU does not have policies on maximum class size. The SER states that the big halls on campus are not used as classrooms which imply that the maximum class size is 66 students. However, interviews with students indicated that required courses are offered in these big halls and the class sizes for some of these exceed 150 students. The Panel noted that the recent large increase in the number of enrolled students against the physical constraints of the facilities presents a risk to the health and safety of staff and students. In addition, the stated target of an enrolment of 7000 students indicated by the President raises the question about how these students might be accommodated in the 3 year timeframe mentioned. The Panel is of the view that the capacity of the facility poses a risk in relation to accommodating safely a large number of students. Students reported a high level of dissatisfaction with the current physical space and inadequacies of the buildings for catering to the large number of students. It was reported that the space issues were particularly acute during the weekend when Kuwaiti students are in attendance.

Recommendation -34

HERU recommends that Gulf University urgently address the issue of safe accommodation for students on campus to ensure there is no risk to the health and safety of students and staff.

Gulf University has acknowledged that its Library needs to be significantly upgraded and has taken the first step by moving it recently into a larger area. While the minimum standards set by the HEC might be met, the Panel concurred with the institution that the Library is inadequate even for undergraduate studies. The collections in relation to student numbers and programme enrolment were noted to be substantially below international norms for undergraduate students. A University library is intended to contribute to the University's teaching, research and community development through the provision and development of information resources, which uses the latest trends in information technology. As the hub of an academic institution, the library needs to be a great deal more comprehensive.

The Panel was informed that the students had access to over 1000 e-books but was unclear about the licensing arrangements and the relevance of these titles to the students and their programmes as a whole. The Panel was alarmed also to find that the library does not provide the sort of collections that are necessary for successful postgraduate studies; for example, there is very limited access to journals with no interlibrary lending agreements in place. Nor are there systematic reader education programmes to show students and faculty how to evaluate and use resources to support teaching and learning as well as research. Student reliance on Google and the open internet for access to information brings with it the danger that students will not become acquainted with the scholarly work in the databases in their field of study. The Library should also be a key player in educating students about academic integrity and methods of citing sources so as to avoid unintended plagiarism.

The Panel urges the University to make good its undertaking to improve the Library and make a substantial investment in it. While the physical collections need to be greatly augmented the emphasis should primarily be on access to electronic resources through purchase of licenses for journal databases and electronic monograph collections. The University also needs to employ professionally-qualified librarians who can lead the development of the library collections and services. This will require a major budget allocation for the Library if it is to support the quality of programmes being offered. Failure to provide postgraduate students with the necessary academic and infrastructural support constitutes a major academic and reputational risk for the University.

Recommendation -35

HERU recommends that Gulf University make a major investment in improving its library collections and professional services to cater for the current and projected growth in numbers.

During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to interview the IT staff and to see the facilities available to students in different departments. Most of the teaching venues are equipped with data/video projectors and computers. GU operates 2 computer laboratories with 44 computers in total.

The existing computer laboratories are used as lecture facilities as well as being open for students to use independently. The University acknowledges that there is no formal benchmarking of the adequacy of its ICT services. GU states that “the University is known to provide adequate ICT services in terms of equipment used and quality of the service”. However, the Panel heard during interviews with students that the facilities and equipment, including IT support services, are inadequate for their academic studies. In some cases academic staff had acquired personal copies of software that they made available for student use; this is not an acceptable (or legal) arrangement.

There are currently no language laboratories for teaching of English language although the Panel was informed that some enquiries were being made *via* vendors on the internet about options available. It suggests that this initiative be followed-up.

The Panel has noted that the University has recently given increased attention to the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in support of its Mission and its academic activities. A number of documents have been produced, including the State of IT Infrastructure at Gulf University: Planning for the Future. The Panel affirms the start that has been made in developing a documented ICT strategic plan and encourages GU to integrate this plan into the broader University planning process as discussed earlier. This can be linked to key operational plans in teaching and learning of individual faculties, research plans, academic services and administrative services plans. The outcome of planning activities includes consideration of risk assessment and allocation of budget for core activities and quality priorities.

Affirmation -4

HERU affirms the development of the ICT Strategic Plan and Policies and Procedures to assure the quality of ICT at Gulf University, and encourages the University to integrate further ICT planning into a planning process that would support the University’s Mission

and feed into all aspects of the core functions of teaching and learning, research, community engagement and administration.

The Panel was concerned to note that back-up data is not only stored in the same area as the system servers but in the same room. Although regular back-up procedures are in place and the systems incorporate a measure of redundancy that provides some protection, the Panel was unable to establish that GU has an ICT disaster management and recovery plan. This constitutes a serious risk for the institution. As a matter of urgency GU needs to develop and implement an ICT disaster plan which includes the storage of back-up data in a separate location, preferably off-campus in order to ensure business continuity.

Recommendation -36

HERU recommends that GU develop and implement an ICT disaster plan that includes the storage of back-up data in a separate location.

10. Research

Gulf University does not have a research plan or clear targets for research although there is recognition by management of the need for the institution to undertake research. There is also a budget allocation but it was not clear that funds are disbursed in any systematic way relative to a strategy for research. The Dean of Graduate Studies does not have any control over the research budget which appears to be primarily used to cover travel to conferences rather than for the support of research projects through the purchase of special equipment or employment of research assistants. At the moment the University appears to be operating at the minimum level in research to comply with local and professional licensing and accreditation requirements. Improvement in the research output is essential, especially important in the light of the number of postgraduate programmes that are offered by the University.

As mentioned earlier, there are a number of active researchers and support is provided by the University on a case by case basis for attendance at conferences. Although some faculty members are active in research, as evidenced by their resume's and annual reports, the institution does not keep a detailed report of its faculty research activities and was not able to provide the Panel with a comprehensive report about faculty research outputs. The SER mentions that there are ongoing discussions between faculty and management to develop an institutional research plan but there was no evidence of tangible progress in that regard.

On the basis of the documentation provided and the interviews conducted, the Panel found that at present research is understood primarily in relation to conference attendance. As GU identifies and grows strategic research niche areas as part of an institutional research plan, this understanding will need to develop by providing support to academics so that they can undertake well-conceived research and publish this research in refereed journals. The provision of such support and the use of research funds should be made as transparent as possible so that there is equal opportunity for staff aspiring to develop as researchers.

The Gulf University research plan will need to take an institution-wide approach to fostering and managing research and include implementing, reviewing and monitoring mechanisms. The Panel suggests that the plan should set out Gulf's vision for research with KPIs and includes criteria for the identification of niche research areas as well as allocated responsibility for this core function. Funding, and how it will be allocated, will be an essential part of the plan.

In the Self-Evaluation Report, GU acknowledged that the University does not have a clear policy on the ethical, safe, and honest conduct of research. The Panel urges the University to develop and implement these policies.

Recommendation -37

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop an institutional research framework which includes a plan with clear Key Performance Indicators; policies to guide implementation and provide appropriate resources to support this core function.

Postgraduate Studies

The Panel met with postgraduate students and with a small number of supervisors of PhD students. It is apparent that even though the University has a set of policies regulating its postgraduate programmes, these policies are not reliably transmitted to the graduate students. The main communication that graduate students have is with their supervisor. Postgraduate research students generally work in isolation from each other, so they do not meet and exchange experiences with their peers.

Even for postgraduate students registered on a full-time basis, their presence on campus and their usage of University facilities appears minimal. Some of the postgraduate students the Panel interviewed mentioned that the University does not provide access to electronic journals and they were not satisfied about the Library and IT facilities the graduate students are entitled to access. The Library's limitations, the excessive teaching loads of staff, and the

limitation of the physical infrastructure of the University hinders the chances the students have to meet and discuss related issues with faculty members or among themselves.

The Panel was also informed that students normally make use of books available in libraries of other universities or public libraries or receive copies on loan from their supervisors. This is arranged by the students themselves and not through the University. This is unacceptable in an institution with a mandate to conduct research. The Panel urges the University to provide its postgraduate students with the necessary support so that they have a learning environment that is conducive to success. The Panel encourages the University to conduct a formal induction day for all new graduate students and to clarify policies governing their studies, and the privileges to which they are entitled.

Recommendation -38

HERU recommends that Gulf University enhance the range and effectiveness of support the University provides to its postgraduate students in order to assure the quality of the programme outcomes in term of research training, adequate supervision, and access to journals and other materials.

A further area for development by the University is a policy and procedure for the external examination of master and doctoral theses. GU currently has a number of experienced examiners but there is no set of guidelines for the selection and approval of additional examiners. This will be needed as GU moves to its target enrolments.

Recommendation - 39

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop and implement a policy and procedure for the selection and approval of external examiners at the postgraduate level.

11. Community Engagement

The Panel noted that the University is not active in its outreach to the local communities, and does not consider community engagement in the performance assessment for faculty members. There are few community events at Gulf University and there have been some exhibitions and sport 2 activities. From the Panel perspective and on the basis of discussions with academic staff and students, there is a lack of understanding of the central function of community engagement in the University. There is, therefore, a need to develop

understanding of community service and clarity on the extent to which GU should focus on this aspect of its work. There needs to be a shared understanding of who comprises GU's community and what form of engagement with this community should take place. In particular, GU will need to consider the curriculum implications of its community engagement approaches.

The Panel encourages the University to recognize that community engagement is the third core function of a higher education institution. GU needs to develop this function by developing a plan through which the institution: (i) conceptualizes its own understanding of community engagement; integrates its identified activities into the other core functions; (ii) ensures that there is allocation of appropriate resources, and (iii) develops and implements quality assurance mechanisms for community engagement.

Recommendation -40

HERU recommends that Gulf University develop a conceptual framework, coordinating structures, policies and resource allocation for community engagement so that individual efforts become part of an institutional plan, that is implemented, monitored and reviewed.

12. Conclusion

Gulf University is a young institution that has expanded rapidly both in terms of student numbers and in its programme offerings, particularly at the postgraduate level, beyond its current managerial, operational and academic capacity. This expansion has been driven by response to market needs.

In order to ensure the quality of its programmes the institution needs to develop a strategic plan, with realistic goals and key performance indicators by which to measure its progress. It also needs to develop and implement a committee structure through which the quality of the core functions can be managed. This would also necessitate the development of a number of frameworks and strategies in quality management arrangements, teaching and learning, research and community engagement as well as consistent implementation of a suite of policies and procedures to give effect to the strategies and to ensure that the quality of provision is assured.

These developments will require significant effort on the part of Gulf University and its community as well as a period of consolidation in the institution in which no further expansion of programmes or student enrolments takes place. The Panel would like to see the institution rationalize its postgraduate offerings until such time as the appropriate

structures, policies and procedures are in place; sufficient academic staff are appointed in the institution so that students receive adequate supervision; and the research infrastructure, for example in Library and ICT, is fit for purpose.

Notwithstanding the above, the Panel is of the view that some of the elements that could transform Gulf University from being a business-driven institution into a respected university which is based on sound academic principles, are beginning to emerge. If the University seizes the opportunity that the external review has provided for self-reflection and improvement, it has the potential to develop into a successful niche university that is responsive to specific human resource needs in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the region.