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للمؤهلات وصنمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Master of Business Administration
University College of Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 19 – 23 January 2014
HC025-C1-R025**

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Acronyms

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

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Panel’) states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is ‘confidence’ in the programme. If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a ‘limited confidence’ judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be ‘no confidence’, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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

A Programmes-within-College review of the University College of Bahrain (UCB) was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 19-23 January 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the College, these are: Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA), and Master of Business Administration (MBA).

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

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

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

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

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to UCB for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty in the MBA.

1.3 Overview of the Department of Business Administration

The University College of Bahrain was established on year 2001. The Department of Business Administration offers Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) and Master of Business Administration (MBA). In 2010-2011 the admission to both programmes was stopped by the HEC. However, the admission to the BBA programme granted again on 2012-2013, whilst the MBA programme remained ceased. The College was established with the aim of preparing students to be successful global leader of private and government sectors. It is guided by the College mission *'The Mission of the University College of Bahrain is to provide Bachelor's and higher degree level courses in the fields of Business Administration, Information Technology, and Communications concomitant with its ability to provide an internationally benchmarked level of education as permitted by its evolving staff and facilities, resources, serving students in Bahrain and the Middle East region'*. The College has 304 students registered in Business Programmes, where 45 are MBA students and 259 are BBA students with the majority of students being Bahraini. The faculty of business contributing to the College are 12, where nine are full-time members and three are part-time members.

1.4 Overview of the Master of Business Administration

The Master of Business Administration is offered by the Department of Business Administration since 2003. The first student was admitted in the Spring Semester on 2003-2004. In 2010-2011 the admission to the programme was stopped by the HEC, and hence, there has been a continuous decreases in the number of current students in the programme. From academic year 2003/2004 to 2012/2013, 132 students have successfully completed their MBA degree. The most recent statistics showed that there are 45 students registered in the programme doing their thesis since 2011.

During interviews with senior management, the Panel was told that a new MBA programme had been developed and is now going through UCB formal approval processes. The Panel stressed that their mandate is to review the existing approved MBA programme against the four indicators contained in the Programmes-within-College Review Handbook.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

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

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

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 aims of the MBA Programme are stipulated as providing graduates possessing the capacity of leadership; the capacity of applying knowledge in challenging circumstances; and capacity to innovate and adapt in the business environment. The Panel found these aims are appropriate to the philosophy underpinning the MBA degree and lending credibility to its unique nature, falling between an undergraduate degree and the Master's degree by thesis. The Panel found these aims aligned to the College's mission. However, the College needs interrogation of these aims and the graduate attributes to give more focus to the MBA programme. In interviews with the senior management, the Panel explored the role of the relationship between the abovementioned capacities, graduate attributes and the large number of programme and course learning outcomes (CLOs). Interviewees acknowledged that by adopting programme frameworks and ILOs from other institutions, the relationship was not clearly appreciated between the three aims and the programme ILOs. Rather the programme ILOs are differentiated under the headings of, Knowledge and Understanding; Subject-Specific Skills; Thinking Skills; and finally General and Transferable skills. Within these lists of differentiated skills, as an example, A4 states: "Have knowledge of different approaches to leadership ..." comes closest to the achievement of the first bullet within the aims. Unfortunately, the possession of knowledge of "approaches to leadership" inadequately describes the intention of the "capacity to lead". In short, this reflects a significant misunderstanding of what the purpose of ILOs is and how they should be written and applied. More important, the significant disjunction between these programme ILOs and the philosophical purpose of the MBA degree is one of the most significant shortcomings of the current degree structure. The consequence is that the underlying philosophy of the MBA is not articulated and impressed into the curriculum of the programme as it stands. The list of programme ILOs listed could equally be used to indicate the outcomes of an undergraduate programme. The Panel recommends that UCB revisit the purpose and aims of the MBA degree generally and to consider the exploration of a unique niche for their programme within the relatively crowded market for MBA programmes within Bahrain.
- 2.2 The nature of the MBA programme does not always reflect progression in the traditional sense of a steady rise in the complexity of disciplinary knowledge. The purpose is rather to introduce students already familiar with the business environment to the theoretical underpinnings of the knowledge they may or may not already have acquired; the enhancement of their skills that such theoretical exposure opens in their way of perceiving the business environment; and the consequent

possible adaptations and enrichment of their thinking to be reflected in their future practice. Similarly, an MBA programme of necessity has to move very rapidly through the basic theoretical elements of disciplinary knowledge. In the case of the UCB degree these are termed 'Core Courses'. The selection of these is fairly standard and appropriate for the qualification. However, these core courses are inadequate for those entering the programme without a business-oriented degree and management experience. The submitted documents show only 18 credit hours allocated for core courses, where there is three credit hours course for each 'Concentration' as prerequisite, in addition to a business statistics course and an economic course. In the views of the Panel, the progression from 'Core' to 'Concentration' courses in terms of disciplinary knowledge is inadequate for the MBA programme. The Panel noted that UCB has an intention to introduce "mandatory preparatory courses for individuals whose undergraduate degree is a non-business administration programme". However, this will widen the admission and underpin the prospect for a significant adjustment in the pedagogical approach towards staff facilitation and student independent learning. The Panel recommends that UCB re-interrogate the way in which the programme is presented to ensure progression in the complexity and balance of Concentration courses.

- 2.3 The Panel is concerned about the evidence from several courses files reviewed by the Panel where the level of courses was not always appropriate for an MBA programme both in terms of the breadth and depth. The Panel's observations of the course specifications and the submitted course files, confirmed that not all the courses presented was at an appropriate level. Furthermore, there were issues that the Panel identified in terms of the level at which assessment was pitched in several of the 'Concentration' courses, suggesting that the level engagement for students was at an inappropriate level for an MBA programme. However, these emerged gaps need the development of a mechanism to ensure a greater level of responsibility is shown for individual courses to meet the norms and standards for the qualification with the appropriate breadth and depth of curricular content. The Panel recommends that UCB develop a mechanism that ensures there is an appropriate monitoring for the articulation of the programme and course structuring, so that the programme can achieve the level and norms of similar MBA programmes.
- 2.4 The intended learning outcomes (ILOs), falls under four categories, namely, Knowledge and understanding, Subject-specific skills, Thinking skills and General and transferrable skills, for the programme and the particular courses presented. However, the Panel found no evidence of how these programme ILOs are aligned to the mission, and programme aims. Furthermore, the mechanisms required to assist students in the achievement of these skills are not clear. There is no process for the determination of specific assessment criteria and the making of this information available to students prior to their engagement with an assessment task, in order to

ensure their responses will assist them in aligning the exercise to the specific intended learning outcome. The information presented to students in the setting of, particularly formative tasks, is inadequate to ensure that these attributes are theoretically embedded in the construction of the programme. During interviews, the Panel noted the absence of both programme and course (ILOs) directly linking and positioning the graduate attributes into the measured learning and understanding of the programme. This is the foundation on which the outcomes-based approach to learning is constructed. Similarly, although the graduate attributes, programme aims and programme ILOs are clearly stated, the Panel noted during interviews that the evidence on how these draw upon each other and, in turn, subsequently determine the course intended learning outcomes, is not well understood or articulated. As a result, there is a clear disjuncture in the construction of the programme. Graduate attributes need to be at the outset of the composition of a programme as the *raison d'être or map* for the construction of the programme. In this respect, the attributes will then underline how the programme is constructed in terms of its mission, aims, individual courses, and the programme and course ILOs, to reflect the attainment of those graduate attributes along with the knowledge and understanding constituting the goals of a particular course. The Panel recommends that the College revise and review the programme ILOs and how these might creatively be tested to measure their appropriateness to the level of the degree and alignment to the mission, programme aims and objectives.

- 2.5 During interviews with MBA management team, the Panel noted that the relationship between programme and course ILOs was not clearly determined; as to whether they were constructed in a top-down or bottom-up way. Similarly, the lack of any direct connections stated within the SER between the listed graduate attributes and those of the programme ILOs, points to a bottom-up approach between the programme and course ILOs. The logic in curriculum development would point to a top-down approach between graduate attributes and programme ILOs, where the desired graduate attributes define the programme ILOs. Similarly, individual courses' ILOs are then aligned with specific and appropriate programme ILOs. There is evidence that an attempt was made to map courses to programme ILOs. A significant problem noted by the Panel is the depth of detail elaborated within each category of the ILOs at the course level. This presents the problem of a significant list of outcomes to attempt to achieve within the space of a semester course. The consequence is that it becomes difficult for a lecturer to ensure that all outcomes are met. The Panel is of the views that the College needs to reduce the number of outcomes per course which are defined broadly in terms of the key objectives of the course. Moreover, the course ILOs were not always appropriate to the level of the MBA degree. The Panel recommends that UCB revise the number of both programme and individual course ILOs structured around the key aims of the programme and its graduate attributes. Course ILOs need to be constructed as tasks

which when successfully performed suggest the attainment of the skill by the student.

- 2.6 During interviews with staff, the Panel found that the methods of teaching were appropriate in specific courses, such as Accounting and Islamic Finance and Banking. However, the written evidence contained within the course specifications across the various courses does not present a uniformly good image. A range of teaching methods was not always present and the emphasis generally is not centred on the critical component of developing independent learning in MBA students. The use of a textbook driven approach to teaching and learning at the MBA level is inappropriate, particularly where the course outline is structured on a chapter-by-chapter basis. This implies a teacher driven, rather than a problem or case study based, curriculum into which the students can make of substantial analysis and inputs. Furthermore, the limited evidence available to the Panel suggests that the nature of the MBA programme was not well understood by those responsible for the drafting of course specifications. As a result the courses to a great extent relied on pedagogical practices more appropriate to the initial stages of an undergraduate programme, namely, teacher tell instruction drawn from and structured around specific textbooks. Evidence from course files that have been seen by the Panel suggests that in many cases assessment tasks were geared not so much to the application of knowledge as the testing of memorization of lecture and textbook content, and the consequent inappropriate “learning approaches”, rather than the deeper engagement required for the development of independent learning, so as to encourage independent and “critical thinking approaches” to learning on the part of the students. The Panel recommends that the College revise the teaching and learning methods to meet the norms of MBA programmes and the pursuit of innovative teaching methods required to engage students in higher order skills development and the capacity to apply their newly acquired knowledge effectively in the work environment.
- 2.7 During the interviews with staff and from the documentation, the Panel noted that there is no assessment policy for the MBA programme. However, an “Assessment Moderation” policy exists for the University. As the name implies, however, the emphasis of the policy rests on the moderation of assessment tasks rather than on the procedures used in determining the various forms which the assessment can take and how these might be aligned to the achievement of particular course or programme learning outcomes. Within the current emphasis on moderation of assessment tasks the Panel found during a range of interviews with the faculty staff that no external moderation of summative end-of-semester examinations was undertaken. Although the weighting awarded to formative learning in the programme was low, it too needs to be subjected to external moderation in order to benchmark the quality of the coursework, reports and assignments generated by

students. The Panel recommends that the College develop an assessment policy for the MBA programme that adopt a system of moderation and external examination for the coursework and examination components of all MBA degree courses.

2.8 With regard to the assessment of student theses, the Panel interviewed two senior academics external to UCB who, together with the examples of student theses presented to the Panel, created a very strong, positive impression of the standards maintained since the compulsory introduction of the thesis component. This offered reassurance to the Panel that those students still to complete their thesis are receiving sound faculty supervision and that the external examination of their theses is sound. The Panel appreciates UCB for the effective policy it has put in place for both the internal supervision and moderation, and external examination of the remaining MBA theses.

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

- Programme aims are clearly stated and aligned to the university mission and vision.
- There is an effective policy in place for both the internal supervision and moderation, and external examination of the remaining MBA theses.

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

- revisit the purpose and aims of the MBA degree generally and consider the exploration of a unique niche for their programme
- ensure progression in the complexity and balance of Concentration courses
- develop a mechanism that ensures there is an appropriate monitoring for the articulation of the programme and course structuring, and the level and norms of the programme
- revise and review the programme ILOs and how these might creatively be tested to measure their appropriateness to the level of the degree and alignment to the mission, programme aims and objectives
- revise the number of both programme and individual course ILOs structured around the key aims of the programme and its graduate attributes
- revise the course ILOs to be constructed as tasks which when successfully performed suggest the attainment of the skill by the student
- revise the teaching and learning methods to meet the norms of MBA programmes and the pursuit of innovative teaching methods required to engage students in higher order skills development and the capacity to apply their newly acquired knowledge effectively in the work environment
- develop an assessment policy for the MBA programme that adopt a system of moderation and external examination for the coursework and examination components of all MBA degree courses.

2.11 Judgement

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

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 The Panel examined the admission process to the MBA programme. However, the Panel encountered no clear policy regarding admission to the MBA programme. The submitted document is for undergraduates studies. The criteria specified concerning work experience requirements are vague, with no indication of the number of years' experience needed and what the minimum level of management experience might be. The Panel recommends that UCB reconsider the admission criteria and draft a specific admission policy for the MBA to ensure minimum levels of management and leadership expertise for students entering the programme.
- 3.2 In most cases, there is evidence of some previous work experience among the alumni of the programme. However, from discussion with faculty members it appears the opposite often prevailed, making the targeted audience inappropriate. The Panel learned during the site visit that there are 45 MBA students facing difficulties in the completion of the thesis component confirms this. There is little recognition that the MBA is usually marketed as a 'degree that is aimed at middle order managers wishing to break into the executive ranks of an organization – hence the emphasis on leadership skills. The Panel recommends that UCB implement a rigorous admission policy that ensure the admitted students' profile match the programme aims.
- 3.3 Most of the faculty members responsible for the programme have left the institution. There is no evidence that a programme director post had existed in the past to oversee the operations and to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning process, rather than this responsibility being vested in the long list of responsibilities of the Head of Department. The argument presented for the current circumstances is that with students now only completing the thesis component the need for a programme director is not necessary and that a collegial interaction between the faculty members associated with the programme suffices to lend direction and quality assurance to the programme. The evidence presented in the form of theses completed supports this assertion. Nevertheless, the Panel found evidence of inappropriate levels of programme assessment suggests that either the responsibilities of the programme director were not clearly understood or that the position might not have been filled. In the absence of the programme director, there were, and remain, very blurred lines of accountability. Documentation presented to the Panel relating to the UCB organizational chart and the faculty members of the Department created a good deal of confusion specifically regarding the mixed responsibilities between the BBA and MBA programmes. The Panel recommends that UCB develop formal lines of

accountability and responsibility for the co-ordination and quality enhancement of the MBA programme.

- 3.4 Following the termination of the teaching programme there is neither sufficient staff nor the requisite practical and professional skills to meet the demands of a MBA programme. A review of the current staff complement suggests only four of them are in possession of PhD qualifications. Furthermore, it is evident that the range of courses each staff member is required to teach results in them teaching courses beyond their area of expertise. The faculty currently associated with the MBA programme are neither all senior enough nor necessarily sufficiently experienced to teach at an MBA level. In turn, appropriately trained senior academics are burdened with administrative functions detracting from their capacity to offer academic leadership to the MBA programme. The consequence of this is to limit the prospect of collaboration between staff in academic research and publication, particularly with regard to the MBA programme. Mentoring of junior academics into research and publication seems particularly lacking. It is noted, however, that those undertaking supervision and moderating duties are performing at an appropriate standard. The Panel recommends that UCB appoint qualified and experienced faculty members for the programme when it reopens.
- 3.5 The Panel welcomed the documentation reflecting faculty participation in workshops associated with the improved capacity of their teaching and learning functions. The Panel found the series of workshops on critical thinking, and teaching and learning philosophy very useful to develop the capacity of faculty of business to meet the programme aims.
- 3.6 There are formal procedures for recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention of academic staff. The Panel received little evidence to show that the policies and procedures were completely implemented. Despite the submitted evidence, that shows the recent promotions of faculty members in the department, there is no operational faculty performance appraisal system and no filter to recruit appropriate academic profiles. Furthermore, the Panel was not able to determine exact causes of the high staff turnover. The Panel recommends UCB develop mechanisms such as exit surveys to determine the cause of high staff turnover and implement the performance appraisal for faculty of business.
- 3.7 The Panel acknowledges that there is a well-functioning induction process for newly appointed staff. Current full-time and part-time staff expressed satisfaction with these arrangements to explore information about the assessment policy and other academic policies before commencing the teaching classes. The Panel appreciates the induction process for new staff members.

- 3.8 There is a Management Information System (MIS) in place for the accumulation and storage of a wide range of data associated with student records. From interviews with various staff and faculty members and the request for student cohort analysis data, the Panel found that the MIS is not optimized. The MIS needs to be effectively used to generate analytical data for the efficient operation of the College. The Panel recommends that UCB explore ways in which data analysis can assist in developing an accurate image of the efficiency of the College's teaching and learning system.
- 3.9 Policies and procedures are consistently implemented to ensure security of learner records and accuracy of results. The Panel appreciates the initiative to establish an external disaster recovery system for the College's records.
- 3.10 During the touring session, the Panel observed the adequacy of lecture venues, computer laboratories and faculty offices for regular teaching activities. The establishment of a Learning Resource Centre is noted although its distance from the Library could be an impediment. From discussion with UCB staff during the tour it emerged that no specific venues or facilities were dedicated to the MBA programme. The resources are biased to favour undergraduates. Physical and material resources are not totally adequate in number, space, style and equipment, especially in terms of MBA specificities, such as leadership practice areas, independent learning solutions, or access to the latest business news. Access to electronic databases is available to all students. It is not clear that arrangements for after-hours attendance of MBA students on campus was optimal in terms of access to facilities such as the library. The Panel is of the view that UCB needs to give greater attention to the specific resource needs for presenting the MBA programme.
- 3.11 In general, there is appropriate student support available. There is counselling services, career office and students activities throughout the year. However, the Panel is concerned about the quality and quantity of professionals available to deliver these services. As observed during the touring session, the laboratories lack IT instructors to cope with the students' needs during the class time. Furthermore, the Panel noted the absence of psychological skills among the student affair staff, yet claiming providing psychological support when interviewed. The Panel of the view that these services are not tailored to the specific needs of an MBA student. This needs to be addressed.
- 3.12 The copy of the Students' Handbook and the interviews with administration staff indicate that arrangements are in place for the orientation of new students through an induction tour of the College's most important administrative components and academic facilities. The main thrust of orientation is geared to undergraduate students. As no fresh admission of MBA students is taking place it was difficult to determine just what measures might be put in place for them and how these might

differ from undergraduate orientation. In the absence of MBA-specific working areas, the induction and orientation does not reflect any adapted resources for postgraduate students. The Panel encourages UCB to create a separate induction programme for MBA students to uniquely address their needs and their status as postgraduate students, when the programme reopens.

- 3.13 There is a tracking system in place. The system allows for data collection but does not go beyond the statistical scope, as per the data provided by the IT staff during the interviews. However, there is no evidence of analysing these data to enable informed decision-making. The Panel recommends that UCB utilize these reporting capabilities to establish a mechanism to monitor and analyse usage of resources for strategic planning purposes.
- 3.14 There is an academic system in place for tracking at-risk students. However, the documentation does not show evidence of the actions taken in support of students at-risk beyond the issuing of warning letters. There is not an effective system in place to ensure appropriate intervention, especially concerning MBA students' special needs (i.e. staff availability at different timings and professional project perspectives). There is no evidence of interventions to assist the over 40 MBA students who are struggling to complete the thesis component of the degree. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement an advising mechanism that differentiates the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, through the provision of some facilities geared specifically to the needs of the MBA programme.
- 3.15 A learning environment exists but at a bachelor degree level only. Since an independent learning environment is critical for MBA students, the current environment does not fit with any MBA philosophy. No evidence was presented to the Panel showing that MBA students are encouraged to participate in independent or informal learning through group projects and similar activities, or setting aside the space and time to allow for students to engage in such activity. The Panel recommends that UCB revise the MBA teaching programme to ensure an appropriate learning environment is in place for MBA programme.
- 3.16 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is a well-functioning staff induction programme that involve both full-time and part-time staff.
 - There are useful workshops to build the capacity of the faculty of business.
 - There are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- 3.17 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- develop an admission policy with a revised admission criteria for the MBA
- define formal lines of accountability and responsibility for the co-ordination and quality enhancement of the MBA programme
- expedite the implementation of a recruitment plan to appoint qualified and experienced faculty members
- expedite the implementation of the appraisal procedure to evaluate academic staff performance, and investigate staff turnover rate to ensure continuum in terms of student experience
- develop and implement a mechanism to support students at-risk
- establish a mechanism to monitor and analyse usage of resources for strategic planning purposes
- explore ways in which data analysis can assist in developing an accurate image of the efficiency of the College's teaching and learning system
- ensure an appropriate learning environment for an MBA programme.

3.18 Judgement

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

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The MBA graduate attributes are clearly stated, however, these attributes are exactly the same as those of the BBA graduates attributes. The attributes of the MBA graduate are normally narrowly defined to include enhancement of leadership qualities and practical management skills. During the interviews with the senior MBA management team, this point was discussed in detail and it was concluded that the current MBA student attributes are not relevant and appropriate for an MBA programme and therefore the supporting mechanisms currently in place for the MBA programme including, curriculum, teaching and assessment methods are not fit for purpose. The Panel recommends that UCB reconsider the graduate attributes of the MBA programme and pursue a closer philosophical alignment of these to the wider curriculum (teaching, learning, research) of the programme.
- 4.2 The information presented and interviews with both senior management and staff suggest that the concept of 'benchmarking' requires fuller exploration by UCB. From the information presented to the Panel the purpose of benchmarking was initially aimed at franchising, or duplicating, the programme outline of the McMaster University. Once this was in place the American University of Beirut was approached to assist with the drafting of programme and course ILOs. Subsequently, a further review mapping exercise was conducted relating to the weighting of the programme in terms of number of courses and some content with the Penn. State University (Harrisburg), the University of Bahrain, and Alfaisal University. UCB has a benchmarking policy which is only a statement of intent with little suggestion on how it might be implemented. The Panel was informed during the site visit that it has yet to be implemented. Similarly, no benchmarking in terms of academic standards was pursued for the course-work components of the MBA degree. The Panel recommends that UCB adopt a more nuanced and sophisticated definition of benchmarking in order that it might become an important tool in the quality assurance and enhancement of the MBA programme.
- 4.3 The Panel acknowledges the report drafted by the external reviewer making suggestions for improvement of the programme's academic standards. The Panel encourages UCB to integrate such feedback into an improvement process for the MBA programme.
- 4.4 There is a rigorous system is now in place for the external examining of MBA theses. The standard achieved for these is comparable to universities internationally. This view of the Panel was also confirmed during the interviews with thesis external

examiners who expressed their satisfaction with the system in place for examining students' theses.

- 4.5 The fairly standard reference to examinations and tests as the key forms of assessment indicate a system based on the summative assessment of learning and the lecturing-based form of that learning. There is little in the way that course specifications were constructed to show that the value of formative assessment is understood. The Panel is of the view that the College review its approach to the assessment tasks around which learning is constructed in the MBA programme be revised, not only to determine an appropriate level for the tasks set but to allow the students to gain in understanding through formative learning exercises.
- 4.6 While documentation suggests that assessment policies and procedures were consistently applied, staff are not monitored to identify whether they are using the range of assessment policies appropriate to the MBA degree, or that the examination papers set by individual lecturers are of the appropriate level. The final examination papers or scripts examined by the Panel do not undergo either internal or external moderation. However, during the interviews with senior faculty members the Panel learned that the view held in the Department is that people appointed with PhD qualifications are sufficiently qualified to ensure their own monitoring. Consequently, no reviews have been conducted, as the view is held that as subject specialists, the individual lecturers teaching on the programme were sufficiently expert to adjust curriculum as dictated by disciplinary theoretical developments and trends. The Panel recommends that UCB adopt and implement internal and external moderation for both the formative coursework and summative test/examination components of the MBA student evaluation.
- 4.7 The Panel found evidence in the course files that shows the level of alignment between assessment and outcomes is not clearly or uniformly understood and applied across all courses. A level of confusion surrounding the concept of 'alignment' was apparent during the interviews with the faculty members and from documentations. Evidence presented in most course specifications and course outlines viewed, suggests only a vague appreciation of how individual ILOs were aligned to particular assessment tasks. The range of assessment tasks was not sufficiently wide to accommodate different forms of learning on the part of students. The Panel recommends that further training of faculty members on the alignment of learning outcomes as performative skills and the assessment tasks appropriate to showing the satisfactory achievement of those skills, be pursued.
- 4.8 During interviews with faculty and after exploring the submitted documents, the Panel found that there have not been any formal procedures or policies for internal moderation for the setting of assessment instruments and grading student

achievement. However, the Panel was informed that the MBA programme will follow BBA programme's internal moderation policy. The Panel recommends UCB expedite the extension of appropriate policies and procedures applying to the undergraduate programme to the MBA programme.

- 4.9 The Panel found no evidence of external moderation for the MBA courses and hence no feedback was obtained for the duration of the taught components of the qualification. This is a critical shortcoming particularly for the benchmarking of academic standards against other institutions, which is the prime purpose of the external moderation practice. The Panel notes the current existence of a system for internal and external moderation of the MBA thesis. The Panel recommends that the College incorporate into the policies and procedures of the MBA programme the external moderation, quality assurance and benchmarking.
- 4.10 Despite the level of students achievement as expressed in a sample of MBA thesis on the Islamic Finance and Banking concentration which are of a good standard and are broadly in line with regional MBA thesis standards, others are not. However, the level of achievement as expressed in samples of student's assessed course work is similar to those at undergraduate level and is not appropriate at the MBA level . The Panel recommends that the College differentiate the work considered acceptable at undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- 4.11 The level of achievement of graduates is good, judging by the series of interviews conducted with current students and alumni. In interviewing the students, however, it became apparent to the Panel that the group consists of young professionals who were all in possession of programme grade averages (PGAs) above 3.5. This fact and the discussion with the alumni suggests that their levels of achievement relied heavily on their independent efforts rather the programme's design and its content. The employers interviewed also expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the graduates. The Panel met a sample of MBA students currently completing their MBA theses. Most of the students are on the Islamic Banking and Finance with a minority on the Management concentration. Overall, the Panel finds students to be highly motivated and self-driven. Despite a sincere satisfaction expressed by the students in terms of programme content and thesis supervision, especially for the Islamic Finance and Banking concentration, the Panel expresses reservations regarding the Management concentration for which the resources are inadequate due to the limited number of MBA-oriented academic staff specialising in Management. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a policy to ensure the performance of MBA students is benchmarked against other reputable business schools in all facets of the programme.

- 4.12 There is no cohort analysis available on the current MBA students detailing rates of progression on a year-on-year basis, or graduation rates for particular cohorts of students. There is, however, statistical data that could be used to provide a detailed MBA student cohort analysis to help in key decision-making. The Panel recommends that UCB develop a regular system of cohort analysis for the MBA programme.
- 4.13 The Panel appreciates the effective policies and procedures in place for the supervision of the MBA theses policies are currently being implemented. A plagiarism policy also exists along with the installation of the “Grammarly” plagiarism software detection programme. Interviews with staff members indicated that all student written work was now required to be run through Grammarly prior to submission. The effectiveness of the programme was endorsed as a mechanism teaching students to avoid plagiarism.
- 4.14 An advisory board for the Department, as opposed to the general University Advisory Board, was constituted in January 2013 and had a second meeting during the course of July 2013. The Panel was able to interview one member of the Advisory Board while a further elected member has since joined the faculty staff. At these two meetings, the *modus operandi* was determined and no significant feedback has yet been provided to the Department. The composition of the Board offers a fair spread of industry input along with faculty representation. This board has had very little impact or concern with the current MBA programme. The Panel encourages that UCB investigate the establishment of a separate Advisory Board for the MBA programme and develops a systematic mechanism for the collection of and actions taken on the decisions of the Board.
- 4.15 The Panel was presented with evidence of the forms used for the conducting of exit, alumni and employer surveys. It is not clear how regularly these surveys are conducted, nor was there evidence presented for the use of the data generated to reflect anything more than superficial satisfaction with the programme. The Panel met with employers of MBA graduates and general satisfaction was expressed regarding the quality of the students. The Panel recommends that the College conduct the regular surveying of alumni and businesses in Bahrain and the Gulf region to determine satisfaction with the MBA programme, areas for improvement, innovation, with a view to achieving quality enhancement.
- 4.16 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is a good feedback from the external examiner report about the MBA programme.
 - There are effective policies and procedures to manage thesis which includes internal and external moderation, plagiarism detection, and supervision.

- The level of students achievements as expressed in a sample of MBA thesis on the Islamic Finance and Banking concentration are of a good standard.

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

- reconsider the graduate attributes of MBA students to pursue a closer philosophical alignment to the wider curriculum (teaching, learning, research) of the programme
- adopt and implement a more nuanced and sophisticated definition of benchmarking in order that it might become an important tool in the quality assurance and enhancement of the MBA programme
- adopt and implement a programme of both internal and external moderation for both the formative coursework and summative test/examination components of MBA student evaluation
- engage in further training of faculty members on the alignment of learning outcomes as performative skills and the assessment tasks appropriate to showing the satisfactory achievement of those skills, be pursued
- institute a strong differentiation in the work considered acceptable at undergraduate and postgraduate level
- develop and implement a policy to ensure the performance of MBA students is benchmarked against other reputable business schools in all facets of the programme
- institute a regular system of cohort analysis for the MBA programme
- conduct regular surveys of alumni and businesses, analyse and use results for improvements and innovation.

4.18 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** 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 There are a number of quality assurance policies, procedures, and regulations to govern the academic programme. These documents are guiding the management, and teaching and learning of the programme. However, the Panel found that the appropriate authorities still have not approved some of the policies and others are not implemented yet. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that the Research Policy is still being discussed and is not approved while there is no evidence of benchmarking, internal and external moderation, introduction of new programs, annual reviews of the programme policies being applied. The Panel recommends that UCB develop, approve and implement effective policies, procedures and regulations in the management of the MBA programme.
- 5.2 There are clearly identified roles and responsibilities of various positions at the College some which are the University Council, the President, Board of Trustees, Head of Department, academic staff, the registrar. The long list of responsibilities of the Head of Department could prevent him from exercising an effective leadership, while some of the duties assigned are not appropriate for a Head of Department and could be carried out by the committees such as reviewing course files, managing student academic discipline, reviewing test questions of major examinations. The Head of Department chairs the Departmental Meetings, attends University Council and represents the Department. The new Head of Department was appointed only four months ago. According to the SER and the submitted minutes of meeting, UCB has six standing committees; Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee, Curriculum Development Committee, Examination Committee, Academic Research Committee, Planning Committee, and Student Affairs Committee . A brief description of the role of each committee were provided, however, there is no evidence of formal terms of reference that set their internal policies, mandates and guidelines. Although the UCB has an Academic Planning Framework, the Department did not have a strategic plan prepared through a process which would embrace a vision and mission statement, goals and indicators, an action plan and the financial requirements. The Panel recommends that UCB reviews its bylaws and regulations to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the administrative positions, councils and committees for an effective decision-making and management of the Institution.
- 5.3 The Panel was provided with an “Academic Quality Manual” during the site visit and a “Know Your Quality System” Handbook as extra evidence, where some

quality management issues with regard to the administration of UCB and the programmes were explained. Furthermore, UCB has a Programme Quality Review Procedures, Programme External Examination Policy, and Benchmarking Policy documents attached to the SER. Nevertheless, the Panel found no evidence that the main structures of the quality assurance management system are in place. There is no evidence of an annual review of the programmes, any formal benchmarking and external moderation of the examinations. The Panel recommends that UCB establish an effective quality assurance management system in order to monitor and evaluate the MBA programme periodically.

- 5.4 The Panel learned from the documents and interviews that the academics and the support staff are communicated their roles and responsibilities towards the administrative issues, students and programmes in the Academic Quality Manual, and “Know Your Quality System” Handbook. Furthermore, some faculty members attended various seminars, workshops and training sessions organized by the DHR/QQA and international organizations on various aspects of quality assurance in teaching and learning. The faculty members prepared their course specifications, and main parts of the programme specification. However, these documents have not been monitored, or assessed to produce any implementation in the development of courses or the programme. The Panel noted with appreciation that academic and administrative staff are aware of the key requirements of the quality assurance programme.
- 5.5 UCB has yet to apply a new formal policy and procedures for developing and approving new programmes. Senior management is aware of the importance of a needs analysis, feasibility study and external stakeholder’s views in establishing the programme goals, mission, learning outcomes and the curriculum. There is not a wider interpretation of the concept of benchmarking and the reflection of a level of confidence in UCB’s own academics to pioneer new programmes with the co-operation of academics in neighbouring and international universities. Rather there is a system of piecemeal borrowing of programmes. The Panel recommends UCB develop, approve and implement a formal policies and procedures for the development of new programmes to ensure that they are relevant and fit for purpose.
- 5.6 With regard to internal programme evaluation, the Panel confirmed that currently the faculty members are meeting to go over their course contents, identify the unnecessary overlaps and adjust their course contents accordingly. However, the Panel did not find any formal evaluation of the programmes, course specifications, teaching and assessment methods, programme and course learning outcomes and their mappings. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement formal

mechanisms for annual internal programme evaluation and implementation of recommendations for improvement.

- 5.7 During the site visit the Panel learned that UCB organizes “career day” annually and invites a number of prominent companies and managers from various professions to visit and address faculty members. At these events UCB staff informally consider the views of the employers. However, so far they have not carried out a formal annual review of their programmes and have not used an internal and external feedback for initiating improvements. The procedure on how stakeholder involvement in the review of programmes and courses is reflected in documents. The Panel recommends that UCB develop and implement formal processes that incorporate the internal and external stakeholders’ views in the annual programme reviews.
- 5.8 UCB very recently prepared questionnaires to give to its alumni and the employers in order to gauge their views with regard to the effectiveness of the MBA programme and the labour market needs. Furthermore, the Panel found during the site visit that UCB requests the views of students at the end of each semester for every course through “course evaluations”. However, so far there is no evidence of such information being used in either course or programme development. There are no formal mechanisms through which surveys are designed, implemented, analysed, and its outcomes being used in programme improvements. The Panel recommends that UCB conduct student, alumni and employers’ surveys, analyse and develop formal mechanisms for feedback from internal and external stakeholders and ensure that their results are used for programme improvements.
- 5.9 During interviews the Panel was informed that currently UCB is in the process of preparing a Research Policy document to encourage faculty members to attend workshops, seminars and conferences in their research fields and supports them to publish in international journals and reviewed conference proceedings. The Panel is of the view that whilst incentives are a useful mechanism for encouraging staff to participate in research and publication, junior academics need to be mentored in writing research publications by senior academics in the early stages of their careers. The Panel encourages UCB to promote joint publication, and collaborative research to establish the confidence required to break into both research and publishing results.
- 5.10 During the interviews the Panel was informed that the training needs of faculty members are informally evaluated and accordingly faculty development workshops are planned for the coming semesters. Some faculty members attended workshops and training programmes on quality assurance in teaching and learning organized by the DHR, but there is no evidence that such knowledge and skills earned at such training is being shared with other faculty members. Furthermore, the Panel did not

find any evidence of formal needs assessment policies, procedures and implementation for the professional development of all their staff. The Panel recommends that UCB establish a mechanism to identify the professional development needs of all staff and to design, implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of a continuing professional development programme.

- 5.11 The Panel learned that informal labour market scoping is carried out by collecting information from alumni and employers during the annual alumni receptions and career days. The Department also provided some secondary information compiled from official documents. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that the submitted document needs a lot of improvements in all respects to be used in scoping the labour market and providing guidance for the updating of the programmes. The Panel could not find any evidence of a formal, structured, continuous scoping of the labour market to provide an input in updating programmes. The Panel recommends UCB develop and implement a formal mechanism to analyse the labour market needs and incorporate it into the programme improvement process.
- 5.12 The Panel identified the establishment of an External Advisory Board (EAB) in 2013 which has met twice up to now. The EAB members are different than PAB members such that there are only external senior executives from different organizations in the EAB. The Panel is of the view that the EAB could be used to provide more information about the labour market needs and thus contribute to the relevance of the MBA programme at UCB. The Panel encourages UCB to develop and formalize the role of the EAB for scoping the market needs.
- 5.13 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The academic and administrative staffs are aware of the key requirements of the quality assurance system.
 - A number of useful arrangements are in process to invite experts to train the faculty members on various aspects of quality assurance in teaching and learning.
 - An External Advisory Board has been established to advise faculty members of recent developments in the world of business.
- 5.14 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:
- develop, approve and implement effective policies, procedures and regulations in the management of MBA programme
 - review and revise its bylaws and regulations to clarify the duties and responsibilities of the administrative positions, councils and committees for an effective decision making and management of UCB

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

5.15 Judgement

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

6. Conclusion

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

There is no confidence in the Master of Business Administration offered by the University College of Bahrain.