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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia

Department of Communication and Multimedia

University College of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 12-15 December 2016

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Table of Contents

Acronyms

ACDC	Academic and Curriculum Development Committee
BACM	Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EEE	Entrance English Examination
HE	Human Resources
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Recourses
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information Systems
PAB	Programme Advisory Board
PD	Professional Development
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QA	Quality Assurance
SER	Self-Evaluation Report

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   2

TOFEL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UCB	University College of Bahrain

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *3*

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A.   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

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

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

Indicator 4: **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at University College of Bahrain

A Programmes-within-College review of the programme offered by University College of Bahrain was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 12-15 December 2016 for the academic programme: Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (BACM) offered by the college.

University College of Bahrain was notified by the DHR/BQA in 17 April 2016 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia with the site visit taking place in December 2016. In preparation for the review, UCB conducted its college self-evaluation of its programme and submitted the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) with appendices on 5 October 2016.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Graphic Design, Multimedia, and Public Relations and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised four reviewers.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *5*

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor of Arts Communication and Multimedia 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 University College of Bahrain will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of the University College of Bahrain to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, the University College of Bahrain is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to University College of Bahrain for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty and administrative staff of the Department of Arts Communication and Multimedia.

C.   Overview of the Department of Arts Communication and Multimedia

The Department of Arts Communication and Multimedia is one of three Departments of University College of Bahrain, which was established in 2007, 'to meet the growing need of Bahraini and Arab media for qualified communicators' as indicated in the SER. Currently the Department offers one programme, which is the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia, with three concentrations. These are, Graphic Design, Multimedia, and Public Relations.

D.   Overview of the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia

The Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia takes its root in the Graphic Design concentration, which was first offered in 2003-2004 with nine registered students under the Information Technology programme. In the Academic year 2007-2008, two additional concentrations namely; Multimedia, and Public Relations were added, and the programme was renamed to be the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia. At the time of the site visit, there were 142 students enrolled in the programme and the total number of faculty members who participate in the delivery

of the programme is 15 (7 full-time and 8 part-time). There were 25 graduates in 2015 and 19 were expected to graduate in 2016.

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia

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**

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *7*

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

1.1 UCB's mission and values are stated in the document 'Vision of the Programme'. Moreover, there are clearly stated generic aims for the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (BACM) programme which are related to the mission of the institution and its strategic goals, as well as being suitable for the programme level. Nonetheless, the programme aims do not reflect the nature of the programme as a Design discipline, and the fact that it includes three distinctive concentrations namely: Graphic Design, Multimedia, and Public Relations (PR), although the documents provided and the site visit interviews confirmed that the three concentrations within the programme are treated by faculty and students as separate programmes within the one degree. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the current name of the award (Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia) is not inclusive of the Graphic Design and Public Relations concentrations, and does not reflect the learning programme of these two concentrations, especially that the concentration is not stated in the qualification certificate of the students. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise the programme aims and the qualification's title to be more inclusive of the three current concentrations.

1.2 The BACM is a four-year programme that includes: university requirements, programme requirements, concentration requirements and free electives as indicated in the programme structure document. The Panel studied the provided documents, and notes that the Graphic Design concentration has 83 compulsory and 42 elective credits (total 125), while Multimedia and Public Relations have 81 compulsory and 42 elective credits (total 123). During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the discrepancy in the total credit requirements between the three concentrations was even more and has been recently reduced upon the external reviewers' comments. However, this discrepancy is still not fully resolved in the programme structure, and interviewed students were concerned about the inequity in workload and cost of their degree. The Panel Recommends that the Department should unify the total credit hours required for the three concentrations. The SER states that three formal external assessors for Public Relations, Multimedia and Graphic Design had provided reports recommending improvements to the curriculum and these reports were provided to the Panel. However, extra evidence provided during the site visit did not clarify to the Panel the improvements made to the curriculum as a result of these external assessments. Moreover, the Panel noted inconsistency in the documentations with regard to progression across courses, as indicated by the prerequisites list provided under the 'Advising Plans' for the three concentrations and the study plan, for example; Introduction to Public Relations (COM202) has no pre-requisite in the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *8*

'Advising Plan', while in the 'Course Description' it has (ENG 101) as a pre-requisite. The Panel advises the Department to revise its documentations to ensure consistency among them. In addition, the Panel noted that the balance between theory and practice in the Public Relations concentration is tilted towards theory. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise the curriculum of the Public Relations concentration to ensure the balance between theory and practice.

1.3   The latest versions of course syllabi were provided to the Panel along with individual course files. The course specification template includes course description, course intended learning outcomes, assessment methods and weights, weekly delivery plan, and textbooks and references. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that the course specifications were inconsistent across the three concentrations, with the Graphic Design documentation more thorough and explicit in its mapping and detail than the documentation for Multimedia and Public Relations. Moreover, the recommended text books in course specifications are often from decades ago, despite the rapid change occurring in the communication fields (e.g. Media, Law, Ethics and Society: book from 1999; Public Opinion: book from 1992), which is also the status of the books available in the library as will be detailed under paragraph 2.8, and there was no evidence in the course specifications that current research findings inform the content and delivery of the courses. In addition, the Panel noted duplication of content and approach in a number of courses, especially in Multimedia and Public Relations, and a low level and standards of creative production content in the Public Relations concentration, which need to be increased. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise the specifications of all courses to ensure their consistency and that the syllabus is proper and supported by more up-to-date books, digital resources and current research underpinning the three concentrations.

1.4   There are 17 Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) in the programme specification document that are mapped against UCB's mission and the programme aims. The PILOs are grouped under four main categories namely; knowledge, specific skills, critical thinking and general skills. The Panel notes with appreciation that these are generally appropriate to the type and level of the degree awarded, appropriately written, and cover expected categories. The Panel studied the mapping of the PILOs to the programme aims and notes that these are not properly done. For example; the PILO 'To be able to adhere to the ethical concern in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations' and the PILO 'To be able to have a multi-tasking skills and team work in carrying out projects in the field of graphic design, multimedia and public relations' are mapped to programme aim number 3 which states 'Enable students to develop a global perspective and adapt to dynamic international issues in communication aspects', although there is no clear correlation between them. During interview sessions, the Panel was not provided with suitable explanation on how the mapping of the PILOs to the Programme aims was achieved. Moreover, there are

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   9

different numbers of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for each concentration; Graphic Design (17), Multimedia (16) and Public Relations (20), which are mapped against the PILOs. The Panel is of the view that these are excessive and repetitive, and should be reduced to only include ILOs that give depth and differentiation between the different concentrations. The Panel therefore recommends that the Department should review and revise the concentrations' ILOs as well as the alignment of the PILOs with the revised programme aims.

1.5   The course specifications stipulate the CILOs of each course. These CILOs are grouped under four categories similar to the PILOs. The Panel studied the sample of course files provided and noted inconsistency in the quality of the way the CILOs are expressed for example; in (Public Relations Techniques - COM 306), the CILO 'define public relations elements', which is categorized under 'knowledge and understanding, and the CILO 'identify public relations process' are not suitable for a third level course and duplicate with (Introduction to PR - COM 202). In some cases, the CILOs were not included, while in other cases the CILOs were not properly categorized; for instance, for (Introduction to Public Relations - COM 202), the ILO 'define the evolution of the field of PR from historical to current practices' is categorized under subject specific skills although it is not a skill. Moreover, evidence provided indicates that faculty members are often attempting to assess a large number of CILOs (11 CILOs in GD IV Studio, 12 in Multimedia Production and up to 16 CILOs in Introduction to Mass Communication & International and Intercultural Communication) in a single course, which is not realistic. Furthermore, the Panel noted that the courses within each of the three concentrations are mapped against the PILOs in the document 'Mapping of ILOs with Course Aims', and no evidence was provided for mapping the CILOs to the PILOs or the courses and their CILOs to the concentrations' ILOs. The Panel recommends that the Department should review the CILOs to ensure that the learning outcomes expected of students are clearly stated in all courses, realistic, and suitable for the type and level of the course, and then map them appropriately to the PILOs and the revised concentrations' ILOs.

1.6   There is a work-based learning element in the BACM programme, as provided in the document 'Internship/Practicum Student Handbook 2010/2011'. The internship is awarded three credits with a minimum fulfilment of 160 hours, and a prerequisite of completing 90 credits, including all college requirements courses. From the evidence provided and interview sessions, the Panel notes that work-based learning has a different course title and arrangements in each of the three programme concentrations: (Approved Professional Experience - GRD440) in Graphic Design; (Multimedia Internship - MMP 403) in Multimedia and (Internship - BUS315) in Public Relations. Moreover, the mapping of these courses with the PILOs shows that the internship course in the Graphic Design concentration addresses six PILOs, Multimedia addresses 10 and Public Relations does not address any. During interviews with

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   10

faculty members and senior management, the Panel noticed conflicting comments and views about the assessment policy, evaluation of students, the role of the faculty instructor and the role of the site/field supervisor (see paragraph 3.10 for further elaboration). It is clear that such a situation raises equity issues if one cohort of students from a particular concentration is either advantaged or disadvantaged by these discrepancies when they are all being awarded the same single degree. The Panel recommends that the Department should streamline the Internship course in the programme content, governance, CILOs and assessment to ensure common understanding amongst different stakeholders.

1.7 UCB has a generic teaching and learning policy, which stipulates the expectations of faculty in delivering the programmes courses, the range of teaching methods used across the Department and the learning environment that it aims to provide to students. The samples of Review Course Specification forms show that teaching methods are captured in the course specification but they are not consistent in range across the three concentrations, not suitable for courses in the creative industries, and consist mainly of lectures and tutorials. During interviews, students and alumni reported general support for the programme's teaching methods; although, some stated that more creative teaching methods need to be used to address a lack of engagement and commitment towards learning by some students. The Panel is of the view that, faculty members would benefit from exposure to research and scholarship on current topics in e-learning, peer evaluation, group assessment, and different forms of feedback, which would lead to learning and teaching advancements that are appropriate to the digital disciplines covered in this programme. Hence, the Panel recommends that the Department should expose the faculty to current research and scholarship in teaching and learning and ensure that their teaching methods are up-to-date and leading in their field of expertise by expanding its continuous Professional Development (PD) activities for the faculty.

1.8 The assessment tools are stated in the course specifications, address formative and summative functions with criteria for marking and are communicated to students. The samples of Review Course Specification forms and course files show that assessment arrangements are captured in the course specifications but again, the assessment tools used are not always suitable for courses in a creative professional practice degree, and show a reliance on examinations as the primary form of assessment. During interviews, the Panel found that the assessment arrangements are well understood by faculty members and students, the use of rubrics provides a transparent mechanism to facilitate the provision of written and verbal feedback to students on areas for improvement in their submitted work. The Panel appreciates that there are assessment arrangements for the courses that faculty and students are well-informed of. The SER states that a process of external moderation for all assessed work is implemented in the programme. During interviews, however, the senior management and faculty

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   11

members confirmed that there is no system in place for the external moderation of students' work (further information is provided in paragraph 3.6). The Examination Committee is responsible for monitoring the conduct of examinations and dealing with student appeals. Furthermore, UCB has a clear provision and procedure for student appeals in the 'Students' Handbook'. However, interviewed students stated that they do not appeal their grades, although they demonstrate appropriate understanding of the procedures. As stated in the SER, the University uses 'Grammerly' software to detect plagiarism; although, there is no provision of plagiarism in the assessment policy. Moreover, external reviewers addressed plagiarism as a challenge to the programme and advised that it should be taken seriously. Hence, the Panel recommends that the Department should develop and implement a robust policy and procedures to detect and prevent plagiarism.

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

- The programme intended learning outcomes are generally appropriate to the type and level of the degree awarded, are appropriately written and cover expected categories.
- There are assessment arrangements for the courses that are well known to faculty and students.

1.10   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- revise the programme aims and the qualification's title to be more inclusive of the three current concentrations
- unify the total credit hours required for the three concentrations
- revise the curriculum of the Public Relations concentration to ensure the balance between theory and practice
- revise the specifications of all courses to ensure their consistency and that the syllabus is proper and supported by more up-to-date books, digital resources and current research underpinning the three concentrations
- review and revise the concentrations' intended learning outcomes as well as the alignment of the programme intended learning outcomes with the revised programme aims
- review the course intended learning outcomes to ensure that the learning outcomes expected of students are clearly stated in all courses, realistic, and suitable for the type and level of the course, and then map them appropriately to the programme learning outcomes and the revised concentrations' intended learning outcomes.
- streamline the Internship course in the programme content, governance, course intended learning outcomes and assessment to ensure common understanding amongst different stakeholders.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *12*

- expose the faculty to current research and scholarship in teaching and learning and ensure that their teaching methods are up-to-date and leading in their field of expertise by expanding its continuous Professional Development activities for the faculty
- develop and implement a robust policy and procedures to detect and prevent plagiarism.

1.11 Judgement

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

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *13*

2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

2.1 There is a clear admission policy at the institutional level that is published in the UCB's 'Governance Manual'. The basic admission requirement is a high school certificate or equivalent with a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 60%. An applicant for whom English is a second language, needs to submit a proof of achieving a minimum score of 500 in test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL). A score below 500 requires the applicant to sit for the Entrance English Examination (EEE) and then foundation courses required will be determined accordingly. Interviews with senior management and students confirmed that the policy is communicated to stakeholders. The Panel finds the admission policy to be appropriate for the programme of Communication and Multimedia. However, the Panel is of the view that additional requirements need to be explored for creative-based concentrations (Graphic Design and Multimedia) such as interviews, aptitude tests or portfolio reviews to reflect the level of talent and performance required to succeed in these two concentrations. Moreover, the Panel noted that the Department admissions policy was not benchmarked and there is no evidence that it is regularly revised based on student performance and stakeholders' feedback. The Panel encourages the Department to benchmark its admission policy with those of similar programmes nationally, regionally, and internationally.

2.2 The BACM admission requirements are stated clearly in 'UCB Admission Policy'. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with the profiles of admitted students which present information on the educational background of students, secondary education track, nationality, gender and their CGPAs in high school. The evidence provided confirms that the admission policy is consistently implemented. The SER indicates that there are English foundation courses for inadequately prepared students and there are implemented measures to follow up on each student's academic progress. However, no evidence was provided in relation to such implemented measures. Moreover, data provided indicates low retention and progress rates amongst enrolled students, and that more than 25% of the enrolled students are at risk of academic failure. The Panel recommends that the Department should conduct a study to evaluate students' performance against admission levels and revise its admission requirements accordingly.

2.3 There are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the programme. The SER states that the programme is managed by the Head of Department (HoD), who acts as the Programme Director. The HoD is responsible for the development of the Department in terms of academic programmes, curricula,

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016 14

scheduling of courses, examinations, academic staff, student body and physical facilities. These responsibilities of the HoD are clearly stated in the 'UCB Governance Manual'. The HoD is supported by the departmental standing committees, each with its own responsibilities, such as Academic and Curriculum Development Committee, and Assessment and Examination Committee. Interviewed faculty members and students demonstrated adequate understanding of the programme's management processes. Nonetheless, from interviews and evidence provided, the Panel confirmed that faculty members are mainly responsible for delivering their courses and do not sufficiently participate in decision-making. They report to the HoD who is solely responsible for all the programme's main operations and decisions. During interview sessions, the Panel noted that specific senior staff hold the responsibility for managing a concentration; however, the Panel is of the view that such a responsibility should be translated into a formal coordinator being assigned to each concentration. The Panel acknowledges that there is a formal structure for the management of the programme with clear lines of accountability that students and staff are well-informed of. However, the Panel recommends that the Department should assign a coordinator for each concentration to be formally responsible for the academic performance in their concentration and assist the HoD in the process of decision-making.

2.4   The Department employs seven full-time faculty members, four of them are PhD holders and the remaining ones hold a Master's degree. In addition, there are eight academic staff from the Business Administration and IT departments who contribute to teaching the common courses. The Panel notes that the overall student-to-staff ratio in the Department is 17:1, which is considered appropriate. Nonetheless, the Department does not calculate the ratio per concentration which is a concern, as Multimedia and Graphic Design have around 20 students each, while Public Relations has more than 100 students. The Panel noted a shortage of qualified staff members in all concentrations, for example; a total of three staff in the Public Relations concentration (one of whom is the HoD) is not sufficient to deliver the concentration. The recruitment plan should address the number of staff needed and the different expertise areas that are needed to deliver courses across the programme, as the faculty profiles and CVs indicate the need to expand the range of faculty qualifications to offer the students a richer learning environment across the different concentrations. Moreover, although evidence provided to the Panel indicates that the Department participates in seminars and conferences, only a few academic staff members conduct research with very limited publications and no evidence was provided to show how the Institution encourages research. During interviews with faculty, it was stated that a teaching load of 15 credit hours is one of the constraints in that respect. The Panel recommends that the Department should develop and implement a long-term, comprehensive plan that ensures the recruitment of a sufficient number of qualified academic staff to cover the requirements of the programme's three concentrations, and

the reasonable re-allocation of teaching loads to enable academic staff to cover academic administrative duties and further develop research.

2.5   There are clear procedures for staff recruitment, promotion, retention and appraisal that are explained in UCB's 'Faculty Guidebook' and interviewed faculty members indicated that these procedures are implemented in a transparent manner. According to the SER, more than one party is involved in the recruitment procedure including Human Resources, the HoD, a member of staff and the process ends with UCB's President for final approval. Upon examining the evidence provided, the Panel noted that the recruitment is conducted in an *ad hoc* manner, as there is no clear recruitment plan developed in response to the needs of the programme. UCB has a clear policy for promotion which is known to all its staff members. Although, the criteria and weightings of the different indicators within the promotion policy are appropriate and there is evidence of implementation, faculty members confirmed the relatively long process involved in applying for promotion. Moreover, the Panel noted that only two faculty members in the programme were promoted during the past five years. Profiles of academic staff show that a number of faculty have been employed for more than five years and faculty members confirmed their satisfaction with the environment within the Institution. However, during interviews with faculty members and senior management, it was evident that there are no exit surveys or measures in place for the retention of academic staff. The Panel appreciates that there are clear recruitment and promotion policies and procedures that are published and that the environment within the Department contributes to staff satisfaction. However, the Panel advises that the Department should study the reasons behind the low promotion numbers, and develop and implement a plan that supports its faculty to be promoted.

2.6   The SER states that performance appraisal of academic staff is based on multi-dimensions including teaching effectiveness, research and publications and academic advising. Interviewed faculty and senior management pointed out that faculty members submit a self-performance report at the end of every academic year and that faculty performance is evaluated by the HoD only during contract renewal, or when a faculty member applies for promotion. Moreover, faculty members are also evaluated by students at the end of each academic semester. Evidence provided shows that course evaluations are more quantitative than qualitative. The Panel notes that, although the outcome of these surveys is communicated to the HoD and the faculty member, no evidence was provided on how these outcomes are further utilised to inform staff's Professional Development (PD). Furthermore, the SER states that the responsibility for the induction of newly appointed academic staff is shared between the Human Resources (HR) Department and the Department of Communication and Multimedia. During interviews with recently appointed staff, it was clarified that it is an informal process that is done on the programme level and the current arrangements are effective to allow smooth integration of new staff members into the Institution. The

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   16

Panel advises that the Department, in collaboration with the Institution, develop and implement a formal induction programme for its newly appointed staff at the institution and programme level.

2.7 UCB has an Oracle-based management information system for administrative and academic day-to-day functions (referred to as LOGSIS). When touring the facilities, the Panel was informed that the Management Information System (MIS) is widely used by staff and the registrar for registration and storage of student records including official grades. Despite the small size of the Department, the Panel noted with concern that data in the SER on student numbers were inconsistent with those provided in different interview sessions. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that efforts are currently underway to enable students to register online starting next academic year. The SER states that the students' accounting feature within the MIS generates student/sponsor bills; however, the Panel was informed by students that they cannot pay their registration fee online and can only access minimal information on-line concerning their course registration and timetable. The Panel acknowledges the existence of an MIS that provides information about the students and supports the academic advising process. However, the site visit interviews showed that the system is not appropriately utilised and evidence that clarifies how the MIS informs decision-making was not provided. The Panel recommends that the Department should ensure the accuracy of data provided through the MIS and utilize its periodic reports in decision-making.

2.8 UCB has policies and procedures to ensure the security of learner records and the accuracy of results. Students' grades are recorded by faculty members through a transparent process which is ensured by the HoD and is additionally validated by the Registration Department. Changes to grades must follow an erratum procedure approved by the HoD and the Registrar. The examination scripts are kept intact for five years after the graduation of the student, whereas the grade sheets are kept in archives to be available for any period. The Panel toured the facilities and noted that physical facilities and computer access on-site are secure and available only for authorized personal and students as per the level of authorization. Moreover, UCB regularly back up all data and information related to the programme to an alternative server for further security of learner records and data. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures in place which are implemented consistently to ensure the safety and security of student records and the accuracy of results.

2.9 The Communication and Multimedia programme utilises four large-scale lecture rooms and 13 mid-scale lecture rooms. It also has access to two auditoriums, each of which can hold up to 75 students. When touring the facilities, the Panel noticed that classrooms are equipped with electronic projectors and computers, there is a ready access to e-mails and electronic resources, and Wi-Fi coverage is good throughout the

campus. The Panel also visited the specialised computer laboratories and noted that the number of laboratories allocated for each concentration is as follows: two for Graphic Design (equipped with 15 Macintosh computers in each); one for Multimedia (equipped with 9 Macintosh computers), and there are no computer laboratories assigned to the Public Relations concentration. Moreover, students stressed in interviews that the software and hardware utilized for the Graphic Design and Multimedia concentrations need to be upgraded urgently because students are using their own hardware and software due to the inadequate resources provided. Computer laboratories are used for teaching and are also available for students to use outside class time, but not during weekends. During the site tour, it was evident to the Panel that the Multimedia concentration lacks the basic physical and technical resources for producing video material such as television studios, portable video cameras, lighting and microphones. Interviewed students emphasised the fact that they rent video equipment to finalise their projects. The Panel recommends that the Department should review the available physical and material resources and develop a plan to update the Graphic Design and Multimedia hardware and software, add more laboratories for Public Relations students and purchase the necessary equipment for video production, including a HD television studio. The Office of Student Affairs takes care of the pastoral care of students. It is staffed with a Student Activities Officer and offers first aid and counselling services. Other available learning resources include the learning management system 'Brightspace'; however, interviewed students confirmed that it is not actively used. The Panel also toured the UCB library which is staffed with one librarian. The Panel was informed that new students receive a comprehensive induction to the library services at the start of each academic year. The Panel is concerned with the physical size of the library. Interviewed students clarified that the physical size of the library is not an issue as most of them prefer to use the internet rather than reading from hard copy resources in the library. Nonetheless, the Panel encourages the Department to provide the students with appropriate study areas on campus. The SER states that UCB's library collection consists of over 9500 books, references and online databases; however, evidence provided revealed that the percentage of books utilized by students enrolled in the programme is too low. Moreover, the books and resources available in the library are out-of-date. The Panel was also told that the subscription of the two online databases (ABI/ INFORM and Online Public Access Catalogue OPAC) expired and need to be renewed. The Panel recommends that the Department should improve the library provision with relevant up-to-date journals and text books, and renew the online databases subscription to support the learning of students in the programme.

2.10   There are tracking mechanisms utilized to determine the usage of the different resources of the programme. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that laboratory technicians are responsible for tracking the utilisation of the laboratories throughout the delivery of the courses, the web-based e-resources are monitored as

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   18

the student enters his/her ID, the instructors keep the attendance registers of the laboratory classes, and the librarian monitors and keeps records of students'/staff usage of the library resources including the e-resources and the loan/return of the physical resources. However, no evidence was provided on the utilization of these outcomes in decision-making beyond the day-to-day operation of the programme. The Panel encourages the Department to further utilise these data to inform its decision-making.

2.11   UCB presents various types of support for the students including laboratory assistants, library, academic guidance and support provided by the Student Affairs Office. During interviews and the site tour, it was evident that the Institution is not prepared for special needs students, with no special paths or lifts in any building to cater for students or staff with special mobility needs. The Panel recommends that the Department - in collaboration with the Institution - should make its premises accessible and user-friendly to students and employees with special needs. The SER states that students are assigned an advisor upon admission who guides them in course planning and academic advising throughout their course of study. Interviews with students showed that they are satisfied with the advising system and the student support in the Department. The Student Affairs Office is responsible for managing student activities and services. Students interviewed by the Panel showed good knowledge and enthusiasm for the services provided by the Office, such as the Carnival Day, Career Day, Bahrain Marathon Relay, National Day and Football Tournament, as well as forwarding non-academic concerns to the counselling officer. The Panel appreciates the range of academic, social and career counselling provided to students, and encourages the Department to conduct surveys to measure the effectiveness of the services.

2.12   Newly admitted students, including students that are transferred from other institutions participate in an induction programme at the beginning of each academic year. The Panel was informed during interview sessions that orientation in 2016 involved a one-hour session per day over three days, and that the schedule comprised both a general section at the institution level, and a programme specific section during which students are provided with relevant information. The orientation sessions are conducted by the senior faculty members, the Registrar and supporting administrative staff. From provided evidence, the Panel noted the low number of students who attend the orientation sessions and it is unclear how students who do not attend the induction are provided with an induction to the Institution and its facilities. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to show how the effectiveness of the orientation sessions is evaluated or how improvements are made. The Panel recommends that the Department should explore alternative options to induct those students who do not attend the orientation sessions and advices that the Department implement formal

measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the orientation sessions and suggest necessary improvements.

2.13   Students are allocated to academic advisors whose duties include monitoring, counselling and guiding the student's progression. Each student is assigned to an academic advisor, at the beginning of his/her study, who allocate four hours weekly for advising tasks. During interviews, students reported positively on the quality of the advising they receive and confirmed that it is always given when needed. Interviews with academic advisors show that students' progress is monitored and whenever a student is at risk of academic failure, she/he receives appropriate help and advice. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned that this is not reflected in the students' performance, as the evidence provided shows that 25% of the total number of students in the programme are placed on academic probation, and the policy allows students to receive up to seven academic probations. The Panel concludes accordingly, that the policy is problematic and the implementation makes it worse. Hence the Panel recommends that the Department should revise its at-risk students' policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms to ensure that effective academic support is provided to this group of students.

2.14   The SER indicates that UCB utilizes extra-curricular activities to expand the students' experiences and knowledge through informal learning. For example it is stated that the Communication and Multimedia students have access to the 'Brightspace' Learning Management System (LMS) which enables students to connect with their instructors. However, interviewed students confirmed that Brightspace is rarely used to connect with their instructors, as it has been recently introduced to replace 'google classroom' which they are more familiar with. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that students and faculty are encouraged to arrange field trips, short film showcases and exhibitions. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned that evidence provided suggests that the extracurricular activities are organised primarily for Graphic Design students and found no evidence of activities organised for Multimedia and Public Relations students. While several activities are organised by the Student Affairs Office; the Panel noted that these activities lack the required level of specification, as most of them could be listed as activities of general interest. The Panel suggests that the Department expand its current facilities for informal learning to enhance the learning experience of students, particularly those in the Multimedia and Public Relations concentrations.

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

- There are clear recruitment and promotion policies and procedures that are published and the environment within the Department contributes to staff satisfaction.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *20*

- There are policies and procedures in place which are implemented consistently to ensure the safety and security of student records and the accuracy of results.
- There is a range of academic, social and career counselling which are provided to students.

2.16   In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- conduct a study to evaluate students' performance against admission levels and revise the admission requirements accordingly
- assign a coordinator for each concentration to be formally responsible for the academic performance in their concentration and assist the head of department in the process of decision-making
- develop and implement a long-term, comprehensive plan that ensures the recruitment of a sufficient number of qualified academic staff to cover the requirements of the programme's three concentrations, and the reasonable re-allocation of teaching loads to enable academic staff to cover academic administrative duties and further develop research
- ensure the accuracy of data provided through the management information system and utilize its periodic reports in decision-making
- review the available physical and material resources and develop a plan to update the Graphic Design and Multimedia hardware and software, add more laboratories for Public Relations students and purchase the necessary equipment for video production
- improve the library provision with relevant up-to-date journals and text books, and renew the online databases subscription to support the learning of students in the programme
- work, in collaboration with the institution, to make the premises accessible and user-friendly to students and employees with special needs
- explore alternative options to induct those students who do not attend the orientation sessions
- revise the at-risk students' policy and evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention mechanisms to ensure that effective academic support is provided to this group of students.

2.17   **Judgement**

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

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *21*

3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

3.1 The Department has provided a clear statement of its graduate attributes and the programme aims and PILOs are formally mapped to them. However, the Panel noted that there are no generic graduate attributes at the institutional level. Moreover, the department's graduate attributes are not stated in the 'Student Handbook 2014-2015' or in the programme specification document. There are three department graduate attributes as follows: (1) knowledgeable and skilled in their disciplines; (2) effective communicators and team members; and (3) innovative and creative, with critical judgment. The Panel noted that there is no proper alignment between the graduate attributes and the programme aim: 'to enable students to develop a global perspective and adapt to dynamic international issues in communication concepts'. Moreover, the graduate attributes are not embedded appropriately in the PILOs. For example, the PILOs mapped to the first attribute focus only on multimedia and graphic design with no mention of the PR graduates. Moreover, PILOs mapped to the second attribute include 'the understanding of history, theory, and criticism' which has nothing to do with the communication skills and team work. The PILO 'showing interpersonal/communicative abilities, in oral and composed presentations' is unsuitably mapped to the graduate attribute that is concerned with innovation, creativity and critical judgment. In addition, there is no evidence provided to the Panel of the coverage of graduate attributes in assessment. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise the mapping of the reviewed programme aims and PILOs, to the graduate attributes.

3.2 UCB has a benchmarking policy and procedures that is adopted by the Department of Communication and Multimedia. The Panel studied the policy and noted that the criteria used in selecting the universities to be benchmarked with are not clearly defined. Moreover, there is no evidence of formal communications, as stated in the policy, between the Department Committee, the Academic and Curriculum Development Committee (ACDC), the University Council, and the institution to be benchmarked with. Evidence provided in interviews indicated that the Department Committee consists of two faculty members from Graphic Design and Multimedia without a representative from the larger Public Relations concentration. Furthermore, the Committee does not have among the members a faculty member from the General Studies Department as stated in the institution's policy. From interview sessions and evidence provided, the Panel confirmed that the benchmarking process has been done once and the focus has been on three aspects only: the graduate attributes, the programme aims and the course structure. In addition, the outcome is presented using tables with columns for each of the universities benchemarked with according to the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016 22

three areas of benchmarking without any further analysis; and there is no recommendation based on the report to be incorporated in the programme review. The Panel recommends that the Department should amend the formal policy on benchmarking to state precisely and clearly the criteria used in selecting the institutions to be benchmarked with, and what is to be benchmarked, so that it includes all aspects of the programme and its outcomes, and develop a mechanism to incorporate the results of the benchmarking in the programme review.

3.3   UCB has a formal Assessment Policy that includes aassessment strategy, assessment methods, and forms of quantitative and qualitative assessment schemes. During interview sessions the Panel was informed that the assessment policies and procedures are implemented and made available to students. Interviewed students showed their awareness of the assessment tools and confirmed that they are documented in the course specification documents. The Panel notes that each faculty member moderates the examinations of his/her colleague in the same concentration, nonetheless this does not guarantee objectivity, as the number of faculty within each concentration is low and can reach two faculty members only. Moreover, evidence provided indicates that the pre-assessment moderation lists of the UCB for the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016 were not signed by any of the department faculty members or by the HoD. Furthermore, from the samples of course files provided, there is no evidence for the internal moderation of formative assessment instruments to ensure their appropriateness as mentioned in the SER and there is no evidence of assessment of students' reports of the internship by the academic supervisor. All the above indicate that the implementation of the assessment policy is not consistently occurring. The Panel recommends that the Department should ensure the consistent implementation of the assessment policies across all courses and the regular revision of these policies.

3.4   While UCB has a clear Assessment Policy for all its programmes, the Panel did not find an assessment plan to show how the PILOs are being assessed and how the closed cycle of assessment is informing new changes to course content or assessment tools. Submitted course specifications included the mapping of the assessment tools to the CILOs. However, during interview sessions, the Panel noted a lack of shared understanding among the faculty members with respect to how to utilize the assessment outcome in evaluating the achievement of the CILOs, especially in relation to assessment tools other than the examinations. Moreover, internal moderation is limited to major examinations and there was no evidence of the internal moderation process improving the alignment of assessment to CILOs. The Panel recommends that the Department should develop and implement a mechanism to ensure the proper alignment of assessment tools to CILOs, and utilize the outcome to ensure the achievement of the PILOs.

3.5   The SER states that the Programme Director – a post filled by the HoD - is responsible for the appropriate adoption of pre- and post-assessment moderation and is responsible for ensuring that the moderation arrangements are adhered to, by all faculty members involved in the assessments. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that internal moderators and double markers are assigned for the courses in their concentration. The role of the internal moderator is to report on whether the assessment criteria have been consistently applied and whether the marks awarded are appropriate through 'Moderation Form'. Although the 'Moderation Form' should be filled by the moderators and then verified and signed by the HoD, the Panel found that the list provided by the Department for all courses pre-assessment moderation dated on 28 October 2015 for the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016 are not signed by any of the programme faculty members or by the HoD. Moreover, some examinations are not moderated according to the forms provided. In addition, the Panel did not find evidence of employing the outcomes of the internal moderation to review and improve the courses and the programme as a whole. The Panel recommends that the Department should adhere to the procedure related to internal moderation and ensure the consistency in the implementation of post-assessment moderation.

3.6   UCB's assessment policy indicates that 'All assessed work submitted for credits in courses are subject to a process of internal and external moderation'. The policy extends to all modes of assessment; not limited to the written midterm and final examinations only. During interviews, the Panel was informed by faculty members that there are external juries for final projects, and that the Department is intending to implement external moderation of different assessment tools in the near future. Moreover, the Panel was informed that the three concentrations of the programme were subjected separately to an external review, where an external reviewer for each concentration was invited to review the programme at a different time (for Public Relations in April 2014, Mass communication and Multimedia in March 2016, and Graphic Design- not dated). Nonetheless, these reviews did not focus on evaluating the assessment tools. The Panel recommends that the Department should develop and implement a clear mechanism for external moderation of its assessment tools and monitor its implementation to ensure consistency.

3.7   During the site visit, samples of students' assessed work from different courses were studied by the Panel, including projects, reports, and first, second, and final examinations. The Panel noted that assessment tools are in most cases aligned with categories A and B of the CILOs and that the level of students' work and awarded grades are in general acceptable for what the programme is expecting from the students. However, as indicated in different parts of this Report, the Panel is concerned with the different aspects of the programme and its expectations. Moreover, the Panel noted that the assessment of category C 'critical thinking skills' of the CILOs did not

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   24

produce sufficient analysis, problem solving or ethical awareness in the students' answers. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise its approach of the setting of assessments to ensure that the assessment of 'critical thinking skills' is at the appropriate level. The Panel also examined the provided samples of Video Production 1 course (MMP301), Public Relations Campaigns course (COM 402), and Final Year Project course (has no number in the study plan) and noted that students' productions do not reflect the expected level and needs further improvement, which in the Panel's opinion is due to the lack of resources (see paragraph 2.9). Notwithstanding the above, the Panel acknowledges that the Graphic Design students' production (GRD 405) is of a higher professional standard than the other two concentrations. From provided evidence, the Panel concludes that the students' performance overall, with the exception of the Graphic Design students, is not comparable with students' performance in similar regional and international programmes.

3.8   The level of achievement of graduates as a whole shows misappropriation in terms of grade distribution for some courses, for example, more than 25% of the registered students in some Public Relations courses were awarded an 'A', while in other courses, a large number of students received an 'F' grade. Moreover, the Panel noted a tendency for a large proportion of 'A' grades being awarded to Graphic Design projects, despite the fact that interviewed jury members stated that the Graphic Design graduates are at the same skills' level as graduates from similar programmes in Bahrain, and that all students are not strong in innovation and creativity. Interviewed employers and internship supervisors were satisfied with the graduates' level of skills. Nonetheless, the Panel did not find any evidence of exit surveys, and when the Panel reviewed the analysis of the alumni survey, the positive outcomes did not quantify the number of respondents who participated in the survey. The Panel found with concern that the analysis of the results is weak and the conclusions bear little relationship to the provided results. With regard to employer surveys (titled by the Department as 'Tools of measuring employability skills'), the Panel found only two questionnaires filled by employers with positive evaluations but with no analysis or report. In addition, while there is an attempt to link the assessments to the CILOs, no evidence was provided for the overall evaluation of the actual achievement of the PILOs. The Panel urges the Department to implement a robust mechanism to assess the level of achievement of its graduate, as aforementioned earlier.

3.9   Cohort data of programme students was made available to the Panel during the site visit. According to the data provided, progression rates (*the average for the last three academic years 2012 - 2015*)   from year one to year two is: 23.31%; from year two to year three: 15.86% and from year three to year four: 18.96 %. The Panel views these progression rates as being unreasonable and incomparable to other local and regional higher education institutions. Provided cohort data also indicate that the average

percentage of students who left the programme for the last three academic years is 18.36%. In addition, the Panel is concerned that a relatively high percentage of students (25%) are currently classified as 'at risk', and that the UCB Bylaws allow for five consecutive academic probations with minimum GPA 1.7, which is far too lenient in comparison to other regional and international higher education institutions. Furthermore, out of 19 graduates in 2014, eight proceeded to appropriate employment (42%). In 2015, only one graduate out of 25 proceeded to appropriate employment (4%). In 2016, only three graduates out of 19 proceeded to appropriate employment (15.7%). However, the Panel was not provided with any explanation for such a low percentage of employment. As indicated under paragraph 2.2, the Panel urges the Department to evaluate student performance and utilize the evaluation outcomes to improve the retention rates of the newly admitted students and the progression rates of the enrolled students.

3.10   Policies and procedures for the management and assessment of work-based learning are in place but the Panel found that there are issues related to the implementation. In its interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that students usually search for a place to fulfil the required 160 hours for the compulsory course of Internship. If a student could not find an organization, the Department will help him/her to find one. In Graphic Design and Multimedia, a faculty member is assigned to follow up the students in the workplace, but interviewed students and internship industry supervisors confirmed that the academic supervisors did not visit the workplace. In Public Relations, faculty members confirmed that there is no assigned faculty member from the Department to follow up the students in the workplace, only an administrative coordinator who is responsible for the logistics. Moreover, the Panel found that the internship course for the Public Relations students has BUS code (business) instead of COM. The Panel was informed by faculty members that the training supervisor awards up to 60% of the final mark and on receipt of the student practicum report and presentation, while the instructor awards up to 40% of the final mark. The Panel found a discrepancy with the UCB 'Student's Handbook of Internship' which states that it is 70% and 30% respectively. The Panel was provided with evidence to support the evaluation forms filled by the industry supervisors and found that the vast majority of evaluations by these supervisors range between 90% and 100% in all aspects of the assessment form. Moreover, the Panel reviewed all provided final reports submitted by students at the end of their internship in Public Relations and found that there is no marking, comments, or grades placed on these reports by a faculty member. Hence, the Panel recommends that the Department should assign specialized faculty members to monitor the students in the workplace in all concentrations, and ensure consistency in the management and assessment of the internship programme.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *26*

3.11   The provided evidence confirmed that the study plan includes a final year project. During interview sessions, it was evident that the interviewed students from Public Relations were not aware of the existence of a graduation project course. Interviewed faculty members clarified that this is due to the name of the course (Final Year Project). The Panel found that the final year projects submitted by Public Relations students do not assess the skills they are supposed to have acquired according to the PILOs. However, the Panel was provided with samples of student's graduation projects in the three concentrations of the programme. The Panel noted that, whereas it is expected that the graduation projects present a variety of strategic and creative work from different areas of communication and media, the projects seen during the site visit especially in Public Relations and Multimedia were weaker than what is usually produced as graduation projects expected for the programme degree. The Panel noted that projects in Public Relations were theoretical pieces of research that did not achieve the standard of work expected at this level of study, and the projects in Multimedia were more of a collection of unengaging scenes that lacked creativity and rhythm. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise its approach to the setting and implementation of graduation projects, especially in Public Relations and Multimedia, ensuring that students are able to meet international standards appropriate for a qualification at the bachelor's level.

3.12   The SER indicates that the programme has an external Programme Advisory Board (PAB) with a membership that includes faculty experts in the programme-specific subject areas, eminent industry practitioners, a representative of successful graduates, and a representative of higher education teaching and learning experts; and chaired by the President of the University. The Panel is of the view that the chair of the PAB should not be from UCB to ensure independent advice is provided. Upon examining the PAB members profile, the Panel noted that the current board consisted of 11 members: three members with professional and industrial backgrounds, three alumni, three from UCB management (one of them is the HoD), and three representative faculty members (one of them is the HoD). The Panel was provided with only two CVs of the external members and one meeting minute without any signature. The Terms of Reference for PAB indicate that the fundamental role of the PAB members is to provide advice and counselling on the development and maintenance of the programme; to support the ongoing quality assurance of all aspects of the programme. The document indicates that the PAB members receive annual Programme Quality Review documents upon which they conduct a full assessment and evaluation of all aspects of the programme and issue a corresponding report outlining their critiques and recommendations for further improvement and enhancement. However, the Panel noted that there is no evidence indicating a regular meeting minutes of the PAB, or an implementation of its feedback, and how is it used to further improve the programme. The Panel recommends that the Department should strengthen the role of the PAB, and ensure that regular meetings are held with clear agenda and documented minutes

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   27

and that PAB feedback is used systematically to inform the programme decision-making.

3.13   The SER states that the graduates and employers' satisfaction is assessed through the exit survey, alumni survey and employers' survey. During the site visit, the Panel met graduates and employers; the graduates were satisfied with their experience and would recommend the programme to other students and the employers spoke positively of the graduates they had employed (albeit in small numbers). With regard to surveys' outcomes, the Panel was not provided with any evidence regarding the exit survey, but was provided with a three-pages alumni survey report (without any date or signature), in which the number of respondents is not stated. The results show that the least positive evaluations come from the Multimedia alumni then Public Relations and Graphic Design respectively. Nonetheless, the Panel found no evidence that the senior management incorporates the results of these surveys into the programme improvements. The Panel was provided with only two questionnaires from employers with no report or analysis. As indicated under 4.8, the Panel urges the Department to ensure systematic implementation and analysis of its graduates, alumni, and employers satisfaction surveys.

3.14   In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, *no appreciation* was noted by the Panel.

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

- revise the mapping of the reviewed programme aims and programme intended learning outcomes to the graduate attributes
- amend the formal policy on benchmarking to state precisely and clearly the criteria used in selecting the institutions to be benchmarked with, and what is to be benchmarked, so that it includes all aspects of the programme and its outcomes, and develop a mechanism to incorporate the results of the benchmarking in the programme review
- ensure the consistent implementation of the assessment policies across all courses and the regular revision of these policies
- develop and implement a mechanism to ensure the proper alignment of assessment tools to course intended learning outcomes, and utilize the outcome to ensure the achievement of the programme intended learning outcomes
- adhere to the procedure related to internal moderation and ensure the consistency in the implementation of post-assessment moderation
- develop and implement a clear mechanism for external moderation of the assessment tools and monitor its implementation to ensure consistency
- revise the approach used for the assessments' setting to ensure that the assessment of 'critical thinking skills' is at the appropriate level

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   *28*

- assign specialized faculty members to monitor the students in the workplace in all concentrations, and ensure consistency in the management and assessment of the internship programme
- revise the approach used for setting and implementing graduation projects, especially in Public Relations and Multimedia, to ensure that students are able to meet international standards appropriate for a qualification at the bachelor's level
- strengthen the role of programme advisory board, and ensure that regular meetings are held with clear agenda and documented minutes and that programme advisory board feedback is used systematically to inform the programme decision-making.

3.16 **Judgment**

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

4. 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.

4.1 At the institutional level, UCB has policies, procedures, regulations and a system of governance. The Panel had access to quality management practices stated in the Academic Quality Manual which reflects UCB's quality assurance/ management practices, specifies requirements and policies to ensure stakeholders' satisfaction, meet stakeholders' requirements and comply with applicable regulatory requirements, locally and internationally. The 'Employee Guide 'and site visit interviews with faculty and senior management confirmed the existence of policies and procedures to define academic standards and the existence of procedures pertaining to faculty recruitment, promotion and workload. Among a number of institutional documents, the Panel had access to the Institutional Effectiveness Policy and Procedure stating university assessment policies and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the Faculty Guidebook but with no evidence of the development or analysis of these KPIs. Moreover, from interviews and provided documents, it was evident to the Panel that a number of these policies are not consistently implemented as indicated in different parts of this Report. The Panel recommends that the Department should adopt a mechanism to monitor the implementation of policies and procedures related to the programme and evaluate their effectiveness.

4.2 The SER lists responsibilities of the HoD and other UCB administrators. The 'Faculty Guidebook' defines the roles and responsibilities of the institution's committees, HoD, faculty members and students. According to the Faculty Guidebook, the HoD of Communication and Multimedia, is the responsible for the development of the Department with regard to academic programmes, curricula, academic personnel, student body, and physical facilities. However, the Panel noted during the interviews that the lines of governance within the Department members are not efficient, with contradictory information provided to the Panel indicating the need for effective leadership. The Panel recommends that the Department should revise its reporting lines within the Department and between the Department and the institution's administration offices to ensure effective leadership within the programme.

4.3 The SER presents clear policies of the quality assurance management system at the institution level although it was not clarified for the Panel in interviews why the Acting Vice-President for Academic Affairs reports to the President and to the Executive Director for Quality Assurance with regard to Quality Assurance (QA) matters. There are some elements of quality assurance in place within the programme of Communication and Multimedia with respect to the internal moderation policy and

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   30

benchmarking procedures, and minutes of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee meetings provided to the Panel indicate that the HoD is representing the Department in this regard. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that the arrangements in place for managing the quality assurance aspects of the programme are not sufficient, and is concerned that there is no holistic and systematic approach to the QA of the programme that is shared amongst the different members of the Department. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Department, in collaboration with the institution and QA unit, should undertake a holistic and systematic review of QA at the programme level to ensure that systems and structures are supporting faculty members and students to achieve high quality educational outcomes.

4.4   According to the SER, quality assurance policies are posted in all locations within UCB and is published on UCB's website. During site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that quality assurance polices are usually communicated by email to all UCB faculty by the Quality Assurance Office. Additionally, the Panel reviewed evidence showing that faculty have attended few workshops and training sessions prepared by the Quality Assurance Office to enhance the awareness among academics and support staff. The Panel learnt from interviews that the role of faculty members to ensure the effectiveness of provision is limited to mapping of PILOs to CILOs, moderation of examination questions and the use of rubrics to grade course assignments. In reviewing meeting minutes of the Department, the Panel noted that quality assurance is not being discussed as a regular topic in the agenda of those meetings, implying that quality assurance as a culture is yet to be developed within the Department. The Panel advises the Department to develop mechanisms for spreading QA culture across the Department to maintain more comprehensive standards of quality assurance across the three concentrations within the programme.

4.5   UCB has a formal procedure to guide the development of new programmes. The procedure stipulates the steps and inputs needed to ensure that new proposed programmes are relevant to the institution's mission and the market needs, fit for purpose and comply with existing regulations. During interview session, the Panel was informed that the Department of Communication and Multimedia has not been through the process of developing a new programme. Hence, the effectiveness of the procedure is yet to be assessed. The Panel studied the procedure and notes that in general the procedure is fit for purpose and advises the Department to assess its effectiveness once implemented.

4.6   According to the SER, UCB conducts annual reviews for each academic programme. The review involves the HoD, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs and the University Council and the Department uses the internal programme review report to prepare and make improvements to the programme. The Panel was provided with the department's meeting minutes in which the 'Annual Program Quality Review Report'

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   31

for the academic year 2014-2015 was discussed, and as a result improvements were made that included introducing new computer laboratories, a review of course specifications and the upgrading of course content and course files. The Panel also reviewed the 'Internal Academic Audit of the Department of Communication and Multimedia' for the academic year 2015-2016 that included a number of criteria such as: course specifications' preparation, verification of course specifications, schedule for moderation, and internal pre-assessment moderation. The Panel notes that although the process is clear, evidence was not provided to the Panel of an action plan or action steps taken after the revision to provide further enhancement and improvement to the programme. The Panel appreciates that there is a process for the annual review of the programme, which is well understood and advises the Department to further utilise the existing procedures of annual programme review to improve its quality assurance system and strengthen the delivery of the programme.

4.7   The SER states that there is a procedure for Programme Quality Review utilised for periodic reviews of programmes with the input of the Curriculum Development Committee, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee, Advisory Board, external examiners and the University Council. Evidence provided and interview sessions indicate that the three concentrations of the programme were subjected separately to an external review, where an external reviewer for each concentration was invited to review the programme at a different time (for Public Relations in April 2014, Mass communication and Multimedia in March 2016, and Graphic Design- not dated). Each reviewer submitted a comprehensive report with recommendations for many improvements related to the implementation of unified credit hours required for graduation for all students from different concentrations, changing or deleting specific courses in the study plans, and improvements to resources and the library. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence on how these reports have contributed to the programme review and improvement and the Panel found that the reviewers' recommendations have not been incorporated into the new programme structure prepared by the Department and approved by the PAB. The Panel recommends that the Department should develop a clear structure for decision-making processes related to periodic reviews of its programme based on a clear analysis of the inputs of all stakeholders.

4.8   In its Academic Quality Manual, UCB places emphasis on meeting the needs and expectations of its stakeholders. The Panel reviewed stakeholder questionnaires for students, alumni, and employers as well as alumni survey reports for each concentration. The Panel acknowledges that students' feedback through course evaluations is regularly collected at the end of each semester. During site-visit interviews, the Panel was informed that students' course evaluations are analysed by the Office of Quality Assurance and results are forwarded to the HoD who then discusses the results individually with the faculty member. Interviewed staff also

BQA
Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain - Department of Communication and
Multimedia - Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia – 12-15 December 2016   32

stated that employers' feedback is collected formally through surveys and informally during university events such as the Annual Career Day. However, the Panel was not provided with any information or evidence on the regularity of the surveys, the total number of alumni in each concentration and the number of alumni surveyed to generate these reports or to inform the decision-making. The Panel recommends that the Department should ensure that the formal mechanism used to solicit feedback from external stakeholders is systematically and regularly implemented, and that results are used to strengthen the programme.

4.9   UCB has a Training and Development policy within the 'Employee Guide' for which there is a shared responsibility between the HoD, HR Department and the employee. The Panel was informed during interviews that faculty training and PD are identified *via* annual performance evaluation reports. As stated in the SER and confirmed by interviews, individual faculty members have responsibility for identifying PD needs. The Panel reviewed the annual self-review forms filled by faculty members at the end of each academic year as part of the annual evaluation of faculty members by the Department. The forms list courses taught, conferences and workshops attended, published research, and student advising activities and also include a list of training workshops and PD activities that faculty members would like to participate in. A list of PD activities for the academic year (2015-2016) attended by faculty members, was provided to the Panel. Additionally, during interview sessions, the Panel learned that UCB usually provides the financial support for faculty members' PD needs. The Panel appreciates that there is a provision for continuous PD of the academic staff.

4.10   The SER states that UCB scopes the labour market by collecting feedback from alumni, employers, and the PAB. The Panel was also provided with a market needs analysis report prepared by UCB, which is not dated. The Panel reviewed the 'Market need analysis report', minutes of the only meeting of the PAB, feedback from alumni and employers, and noted that while the report referred to the general Bahraini employer's needs, no input was utilized from UCB direct stakeholders. The Panel concludes that these initiatives are not integrated and no evidence was provided to indicate a formal process for scoping the labour market. The Panel recommends that the Department should establish further formal mechanisms to continuously and holistically scope the labour market to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and cater for the market needs.

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

- There is a clear process for the annual review of the programme, which is well understood.
- There is a provision for continuous Professional Development of the academic staff.

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

- develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the implementation of policies and procedures related to the programme and evaluate their effectiveness
- revise the reporting lines within the Department of Arts communication and Multimedia and between the Department and the institution's administration offices to ensure effective leadership within the programme
- undertake, in collaboration with the institution and quality assurance unit, a holistic and systematic review of quality assurance at the programme level to ensure that systems and structures are supporting faculty members and students to achieve high quality educational outcomes
- develop a clear structure for decision-making processes related to periodic reviews of the programme based on a clear analysis of the inputs of all stakeholders
- ensure that the formal mechanism used to solicit feedback from external stakeholders is systematically and regularly implemented, and the results are used to strengthen the programme
- establish further formal mechanisms to continuously and holistically scope the labour market to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and cater for the market needs.

4.13   **Judgement**

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

5. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2014:*

There is no confidence in the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia offered by the University College of Bahrain.

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Programmes-within-College Review Report - University College of Bahrain ‑ Department of Communication and Multimedia ‑ Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia − 12-15 December 2016   *35*