



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

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

## **Programme Follow-Up Visit Report**

**Bachelor of Science in Business Administration  
Department of Business Administration  
University College of Bahrain  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**First Follow-up Visit Date: 6-7 February 2017**

**Review Date: 19–23 January 2014**

HC024-C2-F010

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## The Programme Follow-up Visit Overview

The follow-up visit for academic programmes conducted by the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) in the Kingdom of Bahrain is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance review, reporting and improvement.

The follow-up visit applies to all programmes that have been reviewed using the Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework, and received a judgement of 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence'.

This Report provides an account of the follow-up process and findings of the follow-up panel (the Panel), whereby the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BBA), at the University College of Bahrain (UCB) was revisited on 6-7 February 2017 to assess its progress in line with the published Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework and the BQA regulations.

### A. Aims of the Follow-up Visit

- (i) Assess the progress made against the recommendations highlighted in the review report (in accordance with the four BQA Indicators) of UCB's BBA since the programme was reviewed on 19-23 January 2014.
- (ii) Provide further information and support for the continuous improvement of academic standards and quality enhancement of higher education provision, specifically within the BBA programme at UCB, and for higher education provision within the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a whole.

### B. Background

The review of the BBA programme, at UCB in the Kingdom of Bahrain was conducted by the DHR of the BQA on 19-23 January 2014.

The overall judgement of the review panel for the BBA programme, of UCB was that of '**Limited confidence**'. Consequently, the follow-up process incorporated the review of the evidence presented by UCB to the DHR, the Improvement Plan submitted to BQA in February 2015, the progress report and its supporting materials, which were submitted in November 2016, and the documents submitted during the follow-up site visit and those extracted from the interview sessions.

The external review panel's judgement on the UCB's BBA programme for each Indicator was as follows:

**Indicator 1:** The learning programme; **'satisfied'**

**Indicator 2:** Efficiency of the programme; **'not satisfied'**

**Indicator 3:** Academic standards of the graduates; **'satisfied'**

**Indicator 4:** Effectiveness of quality management and assurance **'not satisfied'**

The follow-up visit was conducted by a panel consisting of two members. This follow-up visit focused on assessing how the institution addressed the recommendations of the report of the review conducted on 19-23 January 2014. For each recommendation given under the four Indicators, the Panel judged whether the recommendation is 'fully addressed', 'partially addressed', or 'not addressed' using the rubric in Appendix 1. An overall judgement of 'good progress', 'adequate progress' or 'inadequate progress' is given based on the rubric provided in Appendix 2.

### **C. Overview of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration**

The BBA programme was first offered in the academic year 2002-2003, and graduated its first batch, comprising 47 students, in 2005-2006. In 2010-2011, the admission to the programme was suspended by the Higher Education Council (HEC), and hence, there was a continuous decrease in the number of students in the programme, until the HEC lifted the admission ban on the BBA programme in the academic year 2012-2013. According to the statistics provided by the institution, 883 students have graduated since the commencement of the programme. These statistics also indicate that the number of registered students in the BBA programme decreased from 259 in 2013-2014 to 165 in 2016-2017. There are currently 13 faculty members in the Department; nine are full-time members and four are on a part-time basis. The current staff to student ratio is 1:13, based on the statistics provided during this follow-up visit.

## 1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BBA programme of UCB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of January 2014, under Indicator 1: The learning programme; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 1.1:** *Reduce the number of concentrations offered by the programme.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

The Department of Business Administration at UCB has five concentrations in the undergraduate level, namely, management, marketing, accounting, Islamic finance and banking, and finance. The main concern of the review panel at the time of the previous site visit was that the number of concentrations offered was excessive in relation to the resources available as well as to the number of students enrolled in the programme. According to the Improvement Plan and the progress report, no attempt was made to consider the reduction of the concentrations. The argument presented by the institution was that new faculty members were hired to accommodate the existing number of concentrations offered by the programme and there is no need to reduce the concentrations. However, the evidence provided only includes the CV of one faculty member and the number of full-time faculty did not increase since the last site visit. It is still at nine with only four PhD faculty members from the field of business, two MBA holders, while the other three Master holders were from the field of Arts.

Moreover, during the follow-up visit interviews with BBA students, the Panel was informed that there were incidents where they had to take equivalent courses when specific required courses were not offered. Senior management assured the Panel that equivalences are only offered for one of the elective courses (Tourism). However, the evidence provided revealed that faculty members had to find equivalency for third and fourth years required courses for their advisees in order to graduate. The Panel also examined the statistical data presented by the registrar as part of the Semester Statistical Guide - Fall 2016-2017 and noticed that admission into the different concentrations of the BBA programme varied, with the majority of the intake from the management concentration (72%), marketing and Islamic finance (4% each), accounting (8%) and finance (12%). This indicates that some concentrations are not favoured by students and resources could be channelled to further develop and improve a limited number of highly demanded existing concentrations. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the institution has not taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.2:** *revise the number of both programme and course ILOs to more manageable numbers to improve students' learning outcomes.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) for the undergraduate degree in Business Administration cover four main domains; Knowledge and Understanding (A1-A4), Subject-specific Skills (B1-B10), Thinking Skills (C1-C3) and General and Transferrable Skills (D1-D4). The review panel pointed out that there is a need to include a set of Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs) specific to the respective concentrations to give depth and differentiation between them. Concerns were also raised about the ILOs' appropriateness to the level of the programme and overlaps. According to the progress report, 'the Department has reviewed and updated the programme ILOs and concentration ILOs as per the recommendation'. The previous PILOs were 30 in total and were reviewed and reduced to 21. However, evidence provided and interviews with senior management and faculty indicate that only the ILOs for the accounting concentration were drafted. The Panel also notes that several PILOs are vague and difficult to be mapped or measured in single courses such as PILO A4: 'Gain a familiarity with a variety of fields in the social humanities and social sciences in order to develop as an individual'.

Interviews with senior management and faculty members revealed that the task of revising the PILOs was given to the senior faculty members and the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are continuously revised by the faculty teaching the courses and verified by the Head of Department (HoD) at the beginning of every semester. The Panel studied evidence provided on site and compared CILOs over a number of semesters within the course specification forms for a number of courses. It was evident that some courses reduced the number of CILOs to a manageable degree (e.g. ACC 355, ACT 390, FIN 380, ECON 202, IBF 303) while other courses still have not (e.g. MKT 201, MKT 375, BUS 301, MGT 430, MGT 490).

In addition, the Panel was informed during the follow-up visit interviews with senior management that adequate training was given to faculty on the writing of ILOs. However, the evidence provided only confirmed that one single workshop was held on mapping CILOs with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Descriptors, in September 2016 by the Vice President (VP) of Academic Affairs. Interviewed faculty informed the Panel that two other workshops were held prior to 2014 by two external instructors from the U.S.A and Canada. However, no evidence was provided to confirm this. Furthermore, although senior management clarified that informal benchmarking of ILOs takes place, no evidence was provided to support this claim. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the actions taken have little impact on the quality of the programme delivery and the academic standards, with the absence of proper

guidance and capacity building to enable faculty members to effectively achieve the assigned tasks.

**Recommendation 1.3:** *revise course ILOs to ensure that these are stated as measurable statements and the links to PILOs are justified and complete.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

According to the progress report, the course ILOs were revised by the instructors taking into consideration their synchronization with the PILOs. The Panel was informed during interviews with faculty members and senior management that the revised CILOs are forwarded to the HoD for verification and approval to ensure that these ILOs are simple to understand, measurable, and achievable. However, there is an evident lack of uniformity in the writing of the CILOs and in some cases, the Panel found that the CILOs stated in the provided sample of courses are unsuitable for the expected level of the course (e.g. ACT101 and MGT410). Moreover, although the CILOs are mapped to the PILOs and are well documented, the tables presented do not provide an overall simple and clear identification of the points of linkage between the two. For example, in the course FIN301 (Financial Statement Analysis), CILO A4 ('Students will be able to explain the importance of financial statements analysis for decision making process') is linked to PILO A4 ('Gain a familiarity with a variety of fields in the social humanities and social sciences in order to develop as an individual'). Furthermore, the Panel notes that the verb 'understand' is used repetitively in some courses (e.g. BUS325 and MGT410) and advises that the Department should use other verbs that are overt/measurable and demonstrate comprehension such as compare, discuss, describe and explain.

During the follow-up visit and examination of course files, the Panel also found that in the case of some courses such as MGT101 and MGT301, the CILOs of the courses were exactly selected from the PILOs of the BBA. The Panel sought clarification on such incidents from the senior management who reported that these courses are still in the revision process and expected to be completed by the end of the current academic year 2016-2017. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned that no recent workshops were held on writing the ILOs and mapping the CILOs to PILOs. Hence, the Panel concludes that weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.4:** *investigate ways to expand the range of teaching methods and incorporate independent learning in the curriculum.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

The progress report refers to UCB's Teaching and Learning Policy and indicates that 'all instructors are advised to emphasize on all teaching methods expected of them,

especially independent learning.’ The Teaching and Learning Policy was first approved in April 2013 and was implemented in the first semester of the academic year 2013-2014. It was last revised in July 2016 and the revised version with changes in the teaching methods and addition of a quality assurance and monitoring section was put into effect in September 2016. The policy lists a variety of teaching methods and during interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that faculty are encouraged to adopt student-centred approaches such as class exercises, case studies, games/role play, independent/group projects, seminars, field visits and guest speakers. Faculty members also confirmed that they use different teaching methods and these methods are clearly listed in the course specifications. Furthermore, the students interviewed by the Panel verified that a variety of student-centred teaching and learning methods are utilized in the classrooms and emphasized the benefits gained from incorporating the independent learning in their curriculum. The Panel examined the course files and the provided samples of students' work during the follow-up visit and found that case studies, presentations and projects were utilized in several courses. Therefore, the Panel is satisfied that the actions taken by the programme team have led to noticeable progress in addressing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 1.5:** *develop and implement a policy on formative assessment ensuring that there is common understanding among staff of the term.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

In addition to the Teaching and Learning Policy, UCB Assessment Policy was first approved in April 2013 and was revised in 2016. The Panel finds that this policy is well written and comprehensive. The policy also clearly identifies the different tools of formative assessment to be used for every level of the programme. However, the Pre-Assessment Moderation Guidelines emphasize that the institution follows the continuous assessment path and conducts two tests, which are categorized as ‘formative assessment’. These two tests are more summative than formative as they contribute approximately 20-30% of the student's final course grade. Moreover, the Panel notes that the assessment policy does not include definitions for formative and summative assessment and advises the institution to include a clear definition of the two forms of assessment. One of the main concern raised by the review panel was the limited understanding of formative assessment among faculty members.

During the follow-up visit, interviews with faculty members, the Panel was of the opinion that they were knowledgeable about what formative assessment entailed and how to use the information related to students' progress and understanding to create the opportunity for feedback, which can be integrated in the teaching methods adopted. According to the progress report, a specialized workshop on formative assessment had been conducted to faculty members to familiarize them with its tools



and increase their understanding of the importance of this form of assessment. However, no evidence was provided of such a workshop taking-place. Interviews with the senior management confirmed the emphasis being placed on the utilization of formative assessment and its various tools in the classroom and that a workshop to this effect will be held in the future. Nonetheless, the Professional Development Plan provided to the Panel did not include any workshops or activities dedicated to formative assessment to be held for faculty. The Panel acknowledges the progress of the institution in addressing this recommendation and urges the institution to proceed with building the faculty members' capacity in this regard.

## 2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BBA programme of UCB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of January 2014, under Indicator 2: Efficiency of the programme; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 2.1: ensure the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims.**

**Judgement: Not Addressed**

UCB states that the adopted admission criteria ensure that the students enrolled in the programme match the programme needs. According to the Improvement Plan submitted by UCB, 85% of the total accepted students in the academic year 2014-2015 had achieved an average of 70% or more in their High School. The progress report also confirms that the profile of all the enrolled students have been verified and there are no students with less than 60% High School score. Evidence provided shows that the High School scores of recently admitted students (the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017) were 60% and above. During interview sessions, senior management confirmed UCB's adherence to the admission policy of minimum 60% on high school transcripts, which was a main concern during the previous site visit. However, the latest statistics indicates that the number of students at risk of academic failure was 81 during the academic year 2015-2016 which is relatively high compared to the number of enrolled students (around 200). Senior managers also confirmed that the reports generated on the progression of students are not taken into consideration while revising the admission criteria or the available arrangements to support the students academically at the entry level.

Furthermore, the admission policy states that 'students with literary secondary school certificate admitted to the programme of Business Administration may be required to sit for a placement test in mathematics and computer literacy.' It also states that pre-calculus and foundation computer courses may be offered to those who fail. Currently as corroborated during interviews with students and senior management, only English foundation courses are offered to those students who do not meet UCB English requirements and there are no measures taken to explain why there is a high number of students at risk of academic failure. The Panel concludes that weaknesses still persist in relation to this recommendation and urges UCB to investigate this matter and provide more support at the entry level in order to ensure that the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and objectives.

**Recommendation 2.2:** *develop a mechanism equivalent to TOEFL to assess students after completing the foundation courses.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

UCB's admission requirements related to English proficiency were revised and implemented. The newly revised admission policy for the BBA programme indicates the level of each of the English foundation courses that students are required to pass if they did not score five or more on the IELTS Test. According to UCB's Improvement Plan, the final examination of Foundation III (ENG 099) will be TOEFL or an equivalent test. Foundation English III was revised in January 2016. It lists the assessment methods related to each broad knowledge and skills category, which include quizzes, homework, assignments, group activities, listening activities and examination. The main textbook is 'Achieve IELTS 2' and the sample of final examination provided was similar to the IELTS Test. Interviews with senior management and students indicate that only few students have to take the English foundation courses and students did not feel that they need further support to improve their reading or writing skills. The Panel acknowledges that the institution has demonstrated marked progress in addressing the recommendation.

**Recommendation 2.3:** *define and implement formal lines of accountability and responsibility for the co-ordination and quality enhancement.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

There are clear formal lines of accountability and responsibilities that are implemented as depicted in UCB organizational charts. According to the progress report, UCB has reviewed and revised, where necessary, the roles and responsibilities of the management positions. UCB reviewed the terms of reference, rules and the regulations of all the committees. The progress report also indicates that new committees were created such as the Life Long Learning Committee and all the revised terms of references, rules and regulations were approved by the University College Council (UCC) and implemented. Evidence provided included detailed job descriptions of senior management such as the Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness & Quality, the VP of Academic Affairs, the Director of Quality Assurance and Accreditation. The Job descriptions of the HoD, the Programme Director and faculty members were also provided. However, the current HoD is also the MBA director and the coordinator of the BBA programme. There is a concern that the HoD is overloaded and may not adequately fulfil all the responsibilities of the different positions.

During interviews with senior management members, the Panel was informed that following the revision of the role of the HoD, some of his responsibilities were assigned to faculty members. The Panel was also informed that due to the lack of staff at the

administrative level (student affairs), surveys were not conducted for two consecutive years. Furthermore, the Panel notes that faculty members are not provided with enough guidance and training to enable them to fulfil the task related to quality enhancement. Moreover, the role of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) is mainly to ensure the fulfillment of the assigned tasks without looking enough at the substance. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that the actions taken have little impact on the quality of the programme delivery and the academic standards. The Panel urges the institution to reduce the load of the HoD, enhance the role of the QAAC and ensure that there are enough qualified administrative and academic staff to carry out the different assigned tasks efficiently and constantly.

**Recommendation 2.4:** *expedite the implementation of a recruitment plan to appoint qualified and experienced faculty members.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

UCB did not address the review panel's concern with regards to the small number of faculty (12 faculty members of whom three are part-time faculty) responsible for the programme during the previous site visit. This concern was raised due to the number of concentrations offered in the BBA programme and the lack of senior academics for the Islamic finance, finance and accounting concentrations. The submitted Improvement Plan indicates that UCB has recruited a faculty member specialized in marketing and intends to hire one more faculty member for the management concentration. One faculty member in management was recently hired. However, the current number of full-time faculty members in the BBA programme is nine, which is the same number of full-time faculty at the time of the review in 2014.

There are currently four assistant professors, most of them are recent PhD holders and specialize in different functional areas of business namely finance, accounting, marketing and management. As indicated earlier in this Report, there are also two MBA holders and three Master holders in the field of Arts. Additionally, there are four part-time faculty members contributing to the delivery of the BBA programme (one Ph.D. holder in Arabic language and three Masters' holders in finance, mathematics and English). Nevertheless, there does not seem to be a recruitment plan for appointing new faculty, as hiring is done only if a vacancy is created or a need arises as indicated in UCB Workforce Plan. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the current number is sufficient and complies with HEC regulations in terms of students-to-staff ratio and that the staff retention rate is relatively high. However, the Panel notes the ratio of part-time faculty to the total teaching staff is 30% and the percentage of Masters holders is about 56%, which is high. Therefore, the Panel urges UCB to reduce their reliance on part-time faculty members and hire more experienced academics to address the academic needs of the

different concentrations offered within the programme, as per the review panel recommendation.

**Recommendation 2.5:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

UCB has clear Performance Appraisal Policy and Procedures to identify professional development needs, staff eligible for promotion and future leaders as a part of UCB succession strategy. The QAAC has developed a mechanism for faculty appraisal. This includes a faculty appraisal template and a faculty self-performance report. During the follow-up visit interviews, the Panel was informed that faculty appraisal (including the HoD) is done on an annual basis by the VP of Academic Affairs and this is used to identify the training programmes and continuing development needed. Performance appraisal is mainly based on the faculty self-performance templates, in which each faculty member reports on the evaluated aspects, which include research, co-curricular activities, community engagement, self-development, and student evaluation. There are also clear criteria, weightage and guidelines for evaluation.

Senior managers and faculty members confirmed that this process is consistently implemented in a transparent manner. However, there is not enough evidence to support that faculty appraisal has been used in a systemic way to achieve the above-mentioned goals. Furthermore, staff attrition rate highly fluctuates from one year to another. It increased from 0% in 2011-2012 to 23% in 2012-2013 and 30% in 2013-2014. In 2014-2015, the staff attrition rate was 18% and decreased to 0% in 2015-2016. Although senior managers confirmed that staff usually leave due to the termination of their contracts or unforeseen circumstances, there are no applied mechanisms (e.g. surveys, interviews, etc.) to explain the fluctuation in the attrition rates. The Panel acknowledges the institution's progress and urges UCB to address these issues.

**Recommendation 2.6:** *integrate and use the reporting capabilities of MIS system to enable informed decision-making.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

According to UCB Improvement Plan, QAAC has started analysing the available data from the Management Information System (MIS), especially for tracking the record of students and to suggest actions to the management. The progress report also indicates that UCB has signed an agreement with an external firm to transit its current Student Information System to a new platform, which has been running for students and faculty since the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017. The new platform is

expected to provide a greater variety of on-line facilities to the students and faculty, such as online registration and cloud-based solutions with higher levels of reliability. Furthermore, the Panel was informed during the interviews with senior managers that UCB recently upgraded the Learning Management System (LMS) and 'Google Classroom' was replaced by the Brightspace system. Several workshops were also conducted for both faculty and students to introduce them to the new LMS and interviewed students confirmed that the LMS is widely used and helpful. Senior managers also confirmed that the MIS is effectively used for registration, storage of student records and monitoring of their progress. They also added that currently there are plans to enable students to register and pay their fees online.

Notwithstanding the above, the evidence provided show very simple screenshots. The Semester Statistical Guide for 2016-2017 was also provided as evidence. It includes extensive statistics related to admission, registration, course offering, students' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), and a brief report analysing some of the provided statistics. According to interviews with senior managers, statistical reports are communicated to all the HoDs for review and use. Nevertheless, action plans based on the MIS reports were not provided, although the Panel requested these action plans as well as evidence related to the implementation and follow-up of these actions plans. The Panel concludes that weaknesses still persist in relation to this recommendation and urges UCB to further optimize the usage of its MIS system in the decision making process.

**Recommendation 2.7:** *establish a mechanism to monitor and analyse usage of resources for strategic planning purposes.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

UCB Improvement Plan indicates that the UCB Library Committee (ULC) has developed a mechanism to monitor and analyse the usage of resources to enhance the learning capabilities of the students. It also points out to several initiatives undertaken by UCB to improve the learning process. These include the introduction of the Brightspace LMS and the increase in the number of books, e-journal subscriptions and online databases. Furthermore, faculty members advise the students to use the ProQuest database in preparing their assignments/term papers in order to enhance their independent learning experience. The web-based e-resources are currently monitored as the students enter their ID and the library has a record of students/staff borrowing the resources. A monthly report on the library activities is submitted to the ULC, which 'acts as a channel of communication and dialogue between the Library and its users'. Minutes of the UCB meetings include the update of the library with the latest editions of books, purchase of suggested books by faculty and subscription renewal of journals.

In addition, UCB has a Learning Resource Centre and an IT specialist to oversee and provide the services in the learning resource centre as well as in the computer laboratories. He is responsible for tracking the utilisation of the laboratories and the attendance register of the laboratory classes are kept with the instructors. However, the Panel was informed during the follow-up visit tour and interviews with students that the Learning Resource Centre is not often visited by students and it is sometimes used to host workshops. The Panel was also informed that there is an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Committee in charge of planning, reviewing and enhancing the ICT capabilities (Wi-Fi, MIS, LMS, etc.) of the Institution. Although the terms of reference of the relevant committees are clear, the staff interviewed were not able to explain clearly their responsibilities and contribution in strategic planning. The Panel advises the institution to ensure that the library and laboratories staff are well informed about their roles in monitoring and reporting on the usage of resources in a more professional and systematic manner that support strategic planning purposes. Overall, the Panel acknowledges that the actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on addressing this recommendation.

**Recommendation 2.8:** *develop and implement a mechanism to support at-risk students.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

UCB has clear at-risk students' related policies and procedures, according to which, students with CGPA less than 1.7, are placed on academic probation. Although the policy allows students to receive up to five academic probations, some students are currently on their 10<sup>th</sup> probation because students cannot be expelled if they have accumulated 90 credits or above. However, as per policy, students are expelled if they exceed eight semesters, the maximum period allowed for study (summer sessions are not included). During interviews with the senior management and faculty members, the Panel was informed that at-risk students receive proper guidance and advice to raise their CGPA. Those who fail to raise their CGPA are usually advised to change their concentration or the programme and the courses that do not belong in their new study plan are removed from their CGPA. Interviewed students also confirmed that they receive proper guidance and support from their academic advisors and instructors but none of them was on probation.

The progress report indicates that there is a Student Counsellor to support students who are at risk of academic failure and UCB has an Advising Template to support at-risk students. Nevertheless, the evidence provided only shows a form for advisor's use with a list of student advisees not only at-risk students. Furthermore, the provided list of at-risk students indicates that 81 students were at risk of academic failure in the academic year 2014-2015, which is a very high percentage relative to the total number

of students enrolled in the programme. As mentioned earlier in this Report, no measures were taken to explain why there is a high number of students at risk of academic failure. The Panel is of the view that weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation and urges UCB to investigate this matter, to develop and implement more efficient mechanisms to support at-risk students.



### **3. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates**

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BBA programme of UCB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of January 2014, under Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 3.1:** *develop and implement a mechanism to ensure graduate attributes are embedded in the construction of the programme.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

UCB has five clear and well-defined Graduate Attributes (GAs), which summarize the overarching knowledge, social responsibility, professionalism, life-long learning and collaboration skills that students are expected to develop upon their graduation from the BBA programme. However, the review panel was of the view that these attributes are not explicitly embedded in the construction of the BBA programme and ensured through assessment. This was mainly due to the absence of measurable ILOs that are directly linked to these attributes. The progress report points out that the PILOs have been reviewed taking into consideration the GAs. Evidence provided includes a mapping of GAs to both programme aims and the PILOs, which highlights the relationship between each particular attribute and the corresponding PILOs. PILOs in turn are mapped to CILOs and this identifies which GAs are being addressed in which subject and its contribution to the achievement of the GAs across the curriculum of the BBA programme. During interviews with the senior management and faculty, the Panel was informed that the GAs are embedded in the syllabi and assessment process. However, as indicated earlier in this Report both PILOs and CILOs as well the PILO/CILO mapping require further revision. Hence, the Panel considers this recommendation as not being addressed.

**Recommendation 3.2:** *develop and implement a benchmarking policy that allows effective benchmarking and the findings used to improve the programme.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

During the previous site visit, the review panel found no evidence of a formal policy, or periodic process for benchmarking. The progress report refers to UCB Benchmarking Policy which was developed in 2013 and recently revised in 2016. This policy clearly details the process to be followed when benchmarking as well as the scope it entails. The benchmarking practice is conducted as part of the periodic programme review, which is held once every four years. The Panel notes that the procedure listed in the policy specifies benchmarking with 'international' universities

and does not consider local or regional higher education institutions with similar programmes. The senior management responded to the query from the Panel about benchmarking with local and regional institutions by describing this task as difficult and as not having received positive responses from local institutions. The Panel was also informed that UCB has signed on 18 November 2015, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bogor Agricultural University in Indonesia with cooperation and exchange of faculty, students, research, joint research, external examiners and benchmarking for academic affairs as a dimension of this liaison. Interviews with senior management also confirmed that two visits from representatives of Bogor University took place and the second visit was dedicated to the examination of documents pertaining to courses offered within the BBA undergraduate programme. However, there was no documentation of any changes suggested or implemented as an outcome of this visit. Moreover, the Panel was informed during interviews with the faculty members that informal desktop benchmarking has been conducted with a number of international universities but no evidence of benchmarking after the BQA review conducted in 2014 was available to determine the data, type, or scope of this task. Therefore, the Panel concludes that although, UCB addressed one of the main concerns raised in this recommendation and developed a clear Benchmarking Policy, it is difficult to assess its impact on the quality of the programme delivery and the academic standards due to the lack of evidence.

***Recommendation 3.3: develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes is harmonized across all courses.***

**Judgement: *Partially Addressed***

According to the progress report, UCB has developed guidelines for the pre-moderation of assessment to ensure that the alignment between the assessment and ILOs is uniformly applied across all courses. The provided evidence comprises the moderation forms that clearly specify the main purposes of the pre-assessment moderation process, which include the verification of the appropriateness of assessment tasks. During interviews with the senior management and faculty, the Panel was informed that the Institution implements both internal and external moderation to ensure the suitability of the assessment tools with the ILOs. The Panel was also informed that there is a formal procedure for the external moderation of final examination question papers, which clearly indicates that assessment has to be 'in par' with the course ILOs. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that at the beginning of every semester, all instructors prepare the course syllabi and special care is taken when setting each assessment and designing it to measure the ILOs in each domain such as Knowledge and Subject-specific Skills, in accordance with the nature and level of the course. The Panel examined the course specifications and found that all course syllabi include a mapping of the assessment tools to specific ILOs. However, no sufficient

evidence was provided to the Panel on the implementation of recommendations put forward by moderators. The Panel acknowledges that UCB has taken positive actions to address the recommendation and recommends that the institution should put in place a mechanism to utilise the outcome of the moderation process to further enhance its assessment tools.

**Recommendation 3.4:** *develop and implement an external moderation mechanism such that moderation of the final year courses becomes more rigorous.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

As indicated in the review report, the review panel had several concerns related to external moderation. These concerns included the absence of ‘a formal and proper mechanism to moderate courses externally’ and that ‘different courses within a range of various concentrations’ are assessed by one moderator. The provided Internal and External Moderation Procedures include a brief description of pre-assessment and post-assessment moderation, and more details about double marking. The procedures do not clearly distinguish between internal and external moderation and do not include the procedure and the criteria used in selecting external moderators. The post-assessment moderation is simply described as sending a designated sample of marked students’ work, to ensure accuracy and consistency of assessment decisions. However, the External Moderation Procedures of the final examination questions paper are more comprehensive and clearly list the steps for the pre-examination moderation process, which is conducted every semester. The procedure is initiated by the HoD in coordination with the chair of the Examination Committee requesting faculty to submit the final examination questions, course specifications and the answer keys. The external moderators are requested to fill pre- and post-moderation forms, which are verified by the HoD.

The progress report and interviews with the senior management and faculty confirmed that the process of moderation of final examination has been implemented since the second semester of the academic year 2015-2016 and the Panel was informed that all assessments will be externally moderated in the future. It was also revealed to the Panel during the follow-up visit and interviews that this procedure includes the selection of approximately 8-10 courses from all concentrations in the programme with alternating courses every semester to ensure the moderation of the majority of courses offered across the years. The Panel urges UCB to revise the Internal and External Moderation Procedures to clearly distinguish between the internal and external moderation and include all the details explained to the Panel during the follow-up visit.

Currently, the Department utilizes the assistance of three external moderators. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the Department forwards a sample of

the marked student papers to the external moderators for second marking and comments and the external moderators' feedback is sent to the HoD. However, no evidence was provided to the Panel to indicate the implementation of any recommendation put forward by the external moderator. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the programme to meet the Indicator's requirements.

**Recommendation 3.5:** *institute a regular system of cohort analysis for the BBA programme.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

UCB is currently in the process of implementing a cohort analysis and the Registration Office is following up students' progress over their undergraduate studies duration at the Institution by producing necessary statistical data. The statistical data is forwarded to the HoD for analysis and the senior management informed the Panel during interviews that the statistics will be used for future planning. The Panel examined the type of statistical data presented in the evidence provided as part of the Annual Programme Quality Review Report and submitted as an evidence of the conducted cohort analysis. The Panel found that these statistics are not sufficiently detailed to provide a holistic progression picture of the students' status. Most of the data was general and did not provide any tracking path to prepare a solid cohort analysis for decision-making related to student performance such as retention, concentration selection and student characteristics. The Panel concludes that UCB has not yet taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation.

#### **4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance**

*This section evaluates the extent to which the BBA programme of UCB, has addressed the recommendations outlined in the programme review report of January 2014, under Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance; and as a consequence provides a judgment regarding the level of implementation of each recommendation for this Indicator as outlined in Appendix 1 of this Report.*

**Recommendation 4.1: develop, approve and implement effective policies, procedures and regulations in the management of the BBA programme.**

**Judgement: Partially Addressed**

UCB has several policies and procedures related to the management of the programme that were revised in 2016, such as the Bachelor Degree Bylaws and the admission policies. Several policies and procedures were developed in 2013 such as the Teaching and Learning Policy, the Assessment Policy, the Programme Review Policy, the Benchmarking Policy, and the Internship Policy. These policies and procedures as well as the Research Policy and Strategy, and the internal and external moderation procedures have recently been revised. According to the progress report, all the revised policies and procedures were approved by the UCC. However, the Panel noted that the provided evidence such as HR Policy, Programme Review Policy, Assessment Policy and Benchmarking Policy do not include the effective date, the date of approval, the date of revision and the signatures of the chairperson of the committees involved such as the UCC and QAAC.

During interviews, senior management and faculty confirmed that the policies and the procedures are implemented at the appropriate management level and monitored by the QAAC. They explained that relevant standing committees are responsible for developing and revising each policy and forwarding the revised policy to the UCC after it has been thoroughly reviewed and revised. However, as noted in different parts of this Report, the Panel has a concern about the inconsistent implementation and the monitoring of the policies and procedures related to quality enhancement. The role of the QAAC is very limited in enhancing the quality of the programme and relevant services provided. The Panel also noted a very limited number of qualified administrative staff to support faculty members to carry out the different assigned tasks efficiently and constantly. There is also an urgent need to establish and maintain a better documentation system. The Panel concludes that the actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the programme to meet the indicator's requirements.

**Recommendation 4.2:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

According to the progress report, UCB has reviewed and revised, where necessary, the roles and responsibilities of the management positions. UCB also reviewed the objectives, terms of reference and the regulations of all the committees and new committees were created such as the Life Long Learning Committee. The progress report indicates that all the revised terms of reference, rules and regulations were approved by the UCC and are implemented. Evidence provided include job descriptions of faculty and administrative staff and clear organizational charts, showing relevant committees and reporting lines as well as how the departments fit in the Quality Assurance (QA) processes. During interviews with senior managers, the Panel was informed that the discussions of all the issues related to the BBA programme take place at the department meetings. It was also revealed to the Panel that all the committees are centralized at the institution level and one faculty member represents each department in all the relevant committees. The Panel acknowledges that there are clear lines of accountability. However, although the academic staff work well together as a team, there is still a concern that one person is holding several important positions; this is likely to have an adverse impact on leadership, the effectiveness of the decision-making process, and the time required in achieving some of the tasks listed in the UCB Improvement Plan. Furthermore, there are no sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the actions taken led to marked changes or improvements in the quality of the programme delivery or the academic standards. Therefore, the Panel concludes that weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation.

**Recommendation 4.3:** *establish an effective and formal quality assurance management system in order to monitor and evaluate the programmes periodically.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

UCB has a documented Quality Management System (QMS) that includes its Academic Quality Manual and UCB Regulations Handbook, as well as the various quality system procedures and records related to the implementation of the QMS. One of the main responsibilities of the Director of Quality Assurance and Accreditation is to 'maintain quality and standards in both academic and administrative affairs' at the institution level. He/she also supervises the records and control of quality documents. The VP of Academic Affairs recently filled this post. At the department level, the Programme Director oversees all the matters pertained to quality assurance, curriculum development, internal/external moderation and programme reviews. The HoD, who is also the Director of the MBA programme, currently fills this post.

As indicated earlier in this Report, although there are clear lines of accountability, there are several key positions that are held by one person and several of the assigned responsibilities are not carried out in a consistent and efficient manner (e.g. records and control of quality documents). Furthermore, UCB did not conduct a periodic review of the BBA programme. The Panel also notes that although the policy related to the reviews of programmes includes detailed procedure for the annual review of the programmes, it does not include the procedure related to the periodic review (once in four years) of the programmes. The Panel recommends that the institution should revise the Programme Review Policy and Procedures, develop a clear criteria for the periodic review of the programmes and conduct these reviews on a regular basis.

**Recommendation 4.4:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Fully Addressed*

UCB has formal policy and procedures for the development of new programmes. According to this policy, new programmes are initiated by staff members, who are required to fill the New Programme Feasibility Report Template before submitting their proposal to the HoD. The Course Development Committee (CDC) reviews the feasibility report. One of its main tasks is to ensure that the proposal is consistent with the mission and strategic objectives of UCB. It also confirms that the financial and human resource implications are feasible. Once approved, the Department develops and submits the Programme Outline Structure to the CDC. The VP of Academic Affairs reviews and endorses the documentation approved and submitted by the CDC, which includes the Feasibility Report and the Outline Structure, before submitting it to the UCC for approval. The Board of trustees must also endorse all new approved programmes. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the policy for the development of new programmes was first implemented in November 2013, as indicated in the progress report. The Panel notes that this procedure is well understood, as evidenced by interview responses of faculty members and senior management.

**Recommendation 4.5:** *develop and implement formal mechanisms for annual internal programme evaluation and implementation of recommendations for improvement.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

The progress report confirms that formal mechanisms have been developed for the annual internal programme evaluation in order to lay plans to improve the programme. These mechanisms include course specifications, teaching and assessment methods, programme and course learning outcomes and their mappings.

The suggestions of the external moderators and the feedback from the stakeholders are also taken into consideration in the annual programme review. The Panel notes that there is a clear procedure for the annual review of the programmes. According to this procedure, a senior staff member is assigned to conduct the review and fill the report template. Based on this report, the HoD in consultation with faculty members develop a yearly action plan. The annual review report and the action plan are submitted to the VP of Academic Affairs for review and approval. However, there is no clear process followed in monitoring the implementation of the action plans and assessing the progress achieved.

Evidence submitted include the annual programme review reports and the action plans for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016, as well as the feedback of the VP of Academic Affairs on the first report. The Panel notes that the two reports are mostly descriptive and several parts where the assigned senior staff is asked to comment on certain shortcomings (e.g. student completion rates and difficulties encountered in the management of the programme and the achievement of the programme objectives) are listed as not applicable. The Panel also notes that the percentage of completion and passing is particularly low in the first year of study (35.82% and 37.31% respectively). The number of graduating students are particularly low in finance (0% and 0.5% respectively). However, this shortcoming was not highlighted in these reports. Moreover, the 2015-2016 annual programme review report includes a concentration in engineering management that was not listed in the previous report nor was it referred to in the progress report. In addition, data was not collected from all the relevant stakeholders identified in UCB policy and procedures. The collected data is also not sufficiently analysed and did not refer to significant weaknesses. Furthermore, the Panel noted that several items are not sufficiently addressed in the programme review reports such as programme and course learning outcomes and their mappings. The Panel urges UCB to address these shortcomings and develop clear mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the action plans.

**Recommendation 4.6:** *develop and implement formal processes that incorporate the internal and external stakeholders' views in the annual programme review.*

**Judgement:** *Not Addressed*

According to UCB's Improvement Plan of 2014-2015, the institution has collected data from various stakeholders, which will be analysed and used as an input in the annual programme review report. UCB Programme Review Policy and Procedures document indicates that 'the information for the annual review shall be sourced from student feedback, new text books, Journal articles for new developments in the subject, internal moderation and external moderation reports, Advisory Board meetings, exit and alumni surveys, as well as Employers survey'. However, the annual review reports of



2014-2015 and 2015-2016 rely mainly on the results of the graduating students' survey conducted in 2014-2015 and do not identify significant weaknesses. One of the two listed weaknesses is actually a point of strength, stating that students 'can work in highly diversified work forces and collaborate effectively.' The 2014-2015 programme review report includes a list of strengths and weaknesses identified by one employer and refers to external reviewer report and alumni feedback that are attached as appendixes. The 2015-2016 programme review report refers only to the external examiner report as an appendix.

Moreover, the Panel was informed during the follow-up visit interviews, that surveys were not conducted for two consecutive years due to the shortage of administrative staff. The progress report states that UCB is currently revising the survey questionnaires to collect data from external and internal stakeholders. Evidence submitted only includes some filled students and alumni surveys conducted in the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. Furthermore, the feedback of the BBA Advisory Board is not incorporated in the two annual review reports. The Panel urges the Department to implement UCB's policy and procedures, which dictate that the structured comments collected from the Advisory Board meetings, student and alumni surveys, as well as employers, are incorporated in the annual programme review. UCB should also ensure that comments are regularly collected from a representative number of respondents in order to positively make use of the harvested data.

**Recommendation 4.7: *conduct student, alumni and employers surveys, analyse and develop formal mechanisms for feedbacks from internal and external stakeholders and ensure that their results are used for programme improvements.***

**Judgement: *Not Addressed***

According to UCB's Improvement Plan, student, alumni, and employers' surveys have been conducted and analysed. It confirms that the results of these surveys will be taken into consideration for programme improvements and that the results of students' surveys were shared with the concerned instructors in order to improve teaching effectiveness. It also pointed out that the quality assurance committee is developing formal mechanisms to ensure that the feedback of internal and external stakeholders is used for programme improvements. It was revealed to the Panel during the follow-up visit that surveys were not conducted for two consecutive years and UCB is currently revising the survey questionnaires, as indicated earlier in this Report.

Evidence provided indicated the utilization of student feedback in the annual review of the programme for the academic year 2014-2015. However, no evidence was provided on holistic analysis of the students and alumni surveys conducted in the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015. Moreover, no evidence was submitted to

indicate that employers' surveys have been conducted in the last 3-5 years. The progress report states that the surveys from student, alumni, and employers will be conducted and analysed by the end of the academic year 2016-2017. There is a concern that UCB is deferring the implementation and therefore not addressing the recommendation. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to show that course evaluations are used in course and programme improvements, which is one of the concerns raised by the review panel in the review report. The Panel concludes that UCB has not taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation.

**Recommendation 4.8:** *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.*

**Judgement:** *Partially Addressed*

According to the Improvement Plan, the Academic Research Committee (ARC) regularly requires each faculty member to report his or her professional development activities and plan for the upcoming academic year. The evidence provided comprises a list of internal and external workshops attended by faculty members in the academic year 2015-2016, which includes LMS Brightspace training, NQF workshop, and the international certificate in teaching and learning in higher education organized by the HEC. A list of planned workshops for the academic year 2016-2017 was also provided. The Panel was informed during the interviews with senior management and faculty members that UCB fully covers the cost of attending international conferences and has fully funded the PhD of several faculty members.

The progress report refers to the policy and procedures related to the faculty appraisal according to which, there is an annual overall performance evaluation for faculty members and this is used to identify development needs. The Panel acknowledges that the policy and procedures related to faculty performance appraisal are clear and consistently implemented. As indicated during the interviews with senior management, the VP of Academic Affairs fills the faculty appraisal template and there are clear criteria, weightage and guidelines for the performance appraisal. However, there is not enough evidence to show how faculty appraisal has been used to identify development needs, staff eligible for promotion and 'future leaders', in line with UCB's policy and procedures. Furthermore, there are no evidence provided on mechanisms being implemented to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of faculty professional development related workshops/seminars. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that the actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the programme to meet the indicator's requirements.

## 5. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own progress report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the follow-up visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework and Follow-up Visits of Academic Programme Reviews Procedure:

**The Bachelor of Science in Business Administration programme offered by University College of Bahrain has made 'Inadequate Progress' and as a result, the programme will be subject to a second follow-up visit.**

## Appendix 1: Judgement per recommendation.

Judgement	Standard
<b>Fully Addressed</b>	The institution has demonstrated marked progress in addressing the recommendation. The actions taken by the programme team have led to significant improvements in the identified aspect and, as a consequence, in meeting the Indicator's requirements.
<b>Partially Addressed</b>	The institution has taken positive actions to address the recommendation. There is evidence that these actions have produced improvements and that these improvements are sustainable. The actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the programme to meet the Indicator's requirements.
<b>Not Addressed</b>	The institution has not taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation and/or actions taken have little or no impact on the quality of the programme delivery and the academic standards. Weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation.

## Appendix 2: Overall Judgement.

Overall Judgement	Standard
<b>Good progress</b>	The institution has fully addressed the majority of the recommendations contained in the review report, and/or previous follow-up report, these include recommendations that have most impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. The remaining recommendations are partially addressed. <b>No further follow-up visit is required.</b>
<b>Adequate progress</b>	The institution has at least partially addressed most of the recommendations contained in the review report and/or previous follow-up report, including those that have major impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. There is a number of recommendations that have been fully addressed and there is evidence that the institution can maintain the progress achieved. <b>No further follow-up visit is required.</b>
<b>Inadequate progress</b>	The institution has made little or no progress in addressing a significant number of the recommendations contained in the review report and/or previous follow-up report, especially those that have main impact on the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards. For first follow-up visits, a second follow-up visit is required,