



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Follow-Up Visit Report

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

Second Follow-up Visit Date: 16-18 June 2019

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

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Table of Contents

Acronyms	2
The Programme Follow- up Visit Overview.....	4
1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme.....	6
2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme.....	12
3. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates.....	17
4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance	23
5. Conclusion	29
Appendix 1: Judgement per recommendation.	30
Appendix 2: Overall Judgement.....	31

Acronyms

AAOIFI	Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions
ARC	Academic Research Committee
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
ESC	Examination and Scheduling Committee
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
LITC	Library and IT Committee
LLC	Life-Long Learning Committee
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSS	National Student Survey
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QMS	Quality Management System
SRC	Scientific Research Council

ToRs	Terms of Reference
UCB	University College of Bahrain
UEB	University Examination Board
VP	Vice President

The Programme Follow-up Visit Overview

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

The second 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' during the review and received a judgement of 'Inadequate progress' during the first follow-up visit.

This follow-up visit Report is a key component of the programme review follow-up process, whereby the Master of Business Administration (MBA), at the University College of Bahrain (UCB) was revisited on 16-18 June 2019 to assess its progress, in line with the published Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework and the BQA regulations.

A. Background

The review of the MBA 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 MBA programme of UCB was that of '**No confidence**', where the panel's judgement for each indicator was as follows:

Indicator 1: The learning programme; '**not satisfied**'

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

Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates; '**not satisfied**'

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

A follow-up visit was conducted in February 2017 in which the overall progress of addressing the recommendations of the review report was judged 'Inadequate progress'. Consequently, the DHR constituted a Panel consisting of two members to conduct a second follow-up visit, which incorporates the review of the progress report and the supporting materials submitted by UCB, in addition to the documents submitted during this follow-up visit and information extracted from the interview sessions, to assess the progress the institution achieved in addressing those recommendations judged 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed' in the first follow-up visit report and, as a result, reach an overall judgement about the institution's progress. In its judgement, the Panel adheres to the rubrics stated in Appendices 1 and 2.

B. Overview of the Master of Business Administration

The MBA programme has been offered by the Department of Business Administration since the academic year 2004-2005, and graduated its first batch comprising three students in 2005-2006. In 2010-2013, the admission to the programme was suspended by the Higher Education Council (HEC), and hence, since then, there has been a continuous decrease in the number of students enrolled in the programme, until the HEC lifted the admission ban on the MBA programme in 2013-2014. According to the most recent numbers provided by the institution, 271 students have graduated since the commencement of the programme and the number of registered students in the MBA programme was 37 (12 Female and 25 Male) in 2018-2019. There are also seven faculty members in the Department; six are full-time members and one is a part-time member.

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

This section evaluates the extent to which the MBA 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: *revisit the purpose and aims of the MBA degree generally and consider the exploration of a unique niche for their programme.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Several concerns were raised in the first follow-up visit in relation to the revised aims of the MBA programme, which include an 'Expertise in Islamic Finance' that applies only to one of the two MBA concentrations. The first follow-up report also states that the MBA Programme Learning Outcomes (PILOs) 'lean more towards those of undergraduate programmes', as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel was provided with the programme specifications document that was updated in September 2018. It includes six PILOs for the MBA Islamic Finance and Management concentrations. The Panel notes that the six PILOs reflect well the revised programme aims and its level. These aims indicate that the MBA programme 'concentrates on higher intellectual knowledge; strategic analysis; and research informed reflection on practice' and that its two concentrations 'cover aspects of entrepreneurship, innovation, critical reflection, and the application of strategic theory and practice'. Moreover, the progress report indicates that UCB gained the Accreditation of the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI) in October 2018 and that the Islamic Finance concentration represents a unique niche for the MBA programme, through its affiliation with AAOIFI. This was corroborated during interviews with senior management, faculty and students. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 1.2: *ensure progression in the complexity and balance of Concentration courses.*

Judgement: *Not Addressed*

Several concerns were raised by the Panel during the first follow-up visit in relation to the structure of the MBA programme, which consists of six core courses (18 credits) and six concentration courses (18 credits), in addition to the graduation project (six credits). The Panel was of the view that the structure of the MBA programme and courses did not support the student progression towards the achievement of the

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and aims of the programme. The progress report indicates that the programme team has recently revised the core and the concentration courses following the AAOIFI Review of November 2018. It also states that all the MBA course syllabi have been revised and externally reviewed. The Panel was provided with the updated programme and course specifications, which indicate that the revision was limited to the course contents. This was corroborated during interviews with faculty and senior management. The Panel was also provided with a Benchmarking Report for each MBA concentration based on a desktop analysis of similar programmes that are offered by one local university and one international university. The Benchmarking reports recommended offering foundation courses with zero credit hours, elective courses and new courses in the Islamic Finance concentration. These courses are 'Risk Management', 'Business Ethics', and 'Current Issues in Islamic Banking and Finance and Takaful'. Furthermore, UCB's Report of the Review and Revalidation of the MBA programme includes several conditions and recommendations related to the preparation of the admitted students, the inclusion of an orientation course, and the overall number of credits. This report also includes a recommendation to enhance the benchmarking of the MBA curriculum content by referring to the 'Subject Benchmark Statement' developed by the Quality Assurance Agency in the United Kingdom. However, these recommendations and conditions have not been implemented yet, since the review and revalidation of the MBA programme was only recently conducted in April 2019. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation has not been addressed.

Recommendation 1.3: *develop a mechanism that ensures there is an appropriate monitoring for the articulation of the programme and course structuring, and the level and norms of the programme.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel was not provided with evidence to demonstrate that the Quality Assurance (QA) mechanisms were effectively implemented in the MBA programme, to ensure that the structure of the programme and its course structuring are appropriately articulated, as well as the norms and the level of the programme. The Panel also urged UCB to 'establish and maintain a better documentation system', as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017. The progress report clarifies that following the appointment of the current Vice President (VP) for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation in 2018, all the related policies and procedures as well as the role of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) were revised and enhanced. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel was provided with the programme and course specifications and noted an improvement in the quality of the presented documents. The Panel was also provided with the revised moderation forms and the newly developed annual programme review

template. However, the impact of these newly introduced changes on the academic standards of the MBA programme is still limited. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 1.4: *revise and review the programme ILOs and how these might creatively be tested to measure their appropriateness to the level of the degree and alignment to the mission, programme aims and objectives.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

As per the progress report, the PILOs were revised and updated in 2018-2019 in line with the revised programme aims and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level descriptors. The revised PILOs are currently six for the two concentrations. The Panel studied the PILOs and notes that the current PILOs are well articulated, measurable and do not lean towards those of undergraduate programmes, which was one of the main concerns raised in the first follow-up report of 2017.

During the second follow-up visit interviews with faculty and senior management, the Panel was informed that the revision considered the requirements of the HEC and the BQA, as well as professional bodies such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business and the Association of MBAs. Faculty members confirmed that they have benefited to a large extent from the workshops and meetings that have been conducted by UCB in the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019, to train them on the use of ILOs. The Panel was also informed that the revised ILOs were checked by the QAAC, and VP of Academic Affairs, Quality Assurance and Accreditation, as well as the members of the Advisory Board, who were involved in the review and approval processes. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 1.5: *revise the number of both programme and individual course ILOs structured around the key aims of the programme and its graduate attributes.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel raised several concerns about the appropriateness of the PILOs to the level and aims of the MBA programme, and the large numbers of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs). As per the progress report and provided evidence, UCB has conducted several meetings and workshops in the academic year 2018-2019 to ensure that the ILOs are appropriately written, measurable and aligned to the programme aims and graduate attributes. Moreover, the progress report indicates that advisory board members and four external business and industry professionals were consulted, and they provided their feedback on the revised programme specifications. The Panel examined the provided programme and

course specifications and notes that the ILOs are mapped to four categories: A. Knowledge and Understanding, B. Subject-specific Skills, C. Thinking Skills, and D. Transferable Skills. The Panel also notes that the number of PILOs and CILOs were significantly reduced except for 'Marketing Management' (MKT501). While the number of CILOs ranged from 4-7 in the provided course specifications, the MKT501 course includes 13 CILOs that are not clearly written and consistently presented. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 1.6: *revise the course ILOs to be constructed as tasks, which when successfully performed suggest the attainment of the skill by the student.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel noted that the ILOs of some courses were not correctly written using proper action verbs, and some CILOs were too general and difficult to be measured. The Panel also detected misalignments in the provided CILOs-PILOs mapping and therefore, the Panel was under the impression that faculty had not received sufficient training to assist them in accomplishing the assigned tasks. To address the concerns raised in the first follow-up report, UCB conducted in 2018-2019 several workshops related to the writing and the use of the ILOs, as well as, the CILOs-PILOs mapping and the assessment alignment with CILOs. Moreover, the progress report indicates that UCB revised the internal and external moderation practices and related policies, to reflect on the appropriateness of the developed CILOs and the alignment of the assessment tasks with the programme and course ILOs. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel looked at the course files and the internal and external moderation reports. The Panel notes that the revised policies and procedures were implemented in 2018-2019. The Panel also notes that most of the provided samples of course specifications are well organised and structured. The CILOs were also clearly expressed and appropriately mapped to the PILOs in most of the provided course specifications. Hence, the Panel concludes that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 1.7: *revise the teaching and learning methods to meet the norms of MBA programmes and the pursuit of innovative teaching methods required to engage students in higher order skills development and the capacity to apply their newly acquired knowledge effectively in the work environment.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

To address the concerns raised in the MBA review report of 2014 in relation to teaching and learning methods, UCB has revised these methods to ensure that there is more emphasis on independent learning, research informed teaching, and formative assessment, as indicated in the progress report. UCB also conducted several

workshops on the use of innovative assessment practices and research informed teaching. In addition, the Panel notes that all course specifications have been revised to include formative and summative assessment tools. During interviews with faculty, they explained that workshops conducted at UCB helped them in the revision of the teaching and learning methods. The Panel was also informed that students are provided with real world tasks and examples and that they are encouraged to engage in debates in classroom and online discussions. This was corroborated during the interviews with the MBA students who expressed their general satisfaction with the quality of teaching they receive. However, they pointed out that the library resources, software packages and Information Technology (IT) support need to be considerably improved. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 1.8: *develop an assessment policy for the MBA programme that adopts a system of moderation and external examination for the coursework and examination components of all MBA degree courses.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

As per the first follow-up report of 2017, UCB was urged to revise the MBA assessment policy as well as the procedures related to internal and external moderation. The Panel was then of the view that these policies and procedures were not sufficiently detailed. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel was provided with the revised Assessment and Moderation Policy, MBA Proposal Guidance, MBA Thesis Format Specifications, and UCB By-laws for the Award of the Master's Degree which was recently approved by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees in March 2017.

During the second follow-up visit interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that UCB's moderation process was identified as one of the main areas that required improvement and accordingly, the related policies and procedures were revised and updated. The QAAC also developed new moderation forms for the pre-and-post moderation processes. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that end-of-semester course reporting is conducted 'to discuss the outcomes of the assessment and make adjustments where necessary for future delivery of the course/module', as stated in the progress report. In addition, the evidence provided includes a newly developed UCB Guidance for Assessment, Examination and Moderation and an External Moderators Policy, which aims to 'ensure that assessment and student work are in line with, and comparable in standard to, institutions of higher education in Bahrain and abroad'. UCB has also recently established a University Examination Board (UEB) that receives and considers the moderation reports as part of its task in ensuring the academic standards of UCB graduates. Based on the provided evidence and interviews

conducted during the second follow-up visit, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

This section evaluates the extent to which the MBA 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: *develop an admission policy with revised admission criteria for the MBA.*

Judgement: *Not Addressed*

As per the Progress Report, UCB revised and updated the MBA admission criteria in 2018. According to the programme specifications 'if Applicants do not have a relevant and formal business or management degree background they should provide evidence of a minimum of 3 years' work experience (or equivalent evidence) in a managerial, professional or technical role'. The Student Admissions Policy, only states that applicants should provide 'a detailed resume, including formal education requirements, work experience, extra-curricular activities and community service activities if any'. The number of years' experience needed is still not included, which was one of the concerns raised in the MBA review report of 2014. Other expressed concerns in relation to the cut off scores for IELTS and TOEFL examinations were addressed. However, the Panel is of the opinion that UCB's conditional acceptance for candidates whose Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is less than 2.7 based on passing the first four MBA courses with a minimum CGPA of 2.7, needs to be revised. Hence, the Panel is of view that weaknesses still persist in relation to this recommendation and concludes that this recommendation is not addressed.

Recommendation 2.2: *define formal lines of accountability and responsibility for the co-ordination and quality enhancement of the MBA programme.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

As per the progress report, 'a full overhaul of the academic governance arrangements was undertaken in September and October 2018', following the appointment of the VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation in 2018. It led to significant changes in the terms of reference of the standing committees, QA lines of responsibility, and reporting arrangements. Furthermore, a QA Office was established, which is headed by a newly appointed QA Manager to fulfil the requirements of the HEC and the BQA. The VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation chairs the QAAC, which oversees QA matters and monitors the college compliance with the related policies and procedures. While the load of the Head of Department (HoD) was partially

reduced, the role of the QAAC was significantly enhanced by appointing qualified administrative and academic staff to carry out certain tasks, which addresses the main concern raised in the first follow-up report of 2017 and the MBA Review Report of 2014. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is addressed.

Recommendation 2.3: *expedite the implementation of a recruitment plan to appoint qualified and experienced faculty members.*

Judgement: *Not Addressed*

UCB has clear Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures, in addition to the HR-Policies & Procedures Handbook and UCB Recruitment and Professional Development Plan 2018-2019. The progress report indicates the alignment of UCB's HR policies and procedures with the HEC requirements and explains that the implementation is monitored by the HR Department to ensure compliance with HEC rules and regulations. However, the progress report did not refer to any implemented plans to address the concern raised in the second follow-up report of 2017 with regard to the small number of faculty with PhD degrees. This concern was also raised in the MBA review report of 2014 due to the lack of senior academics for the Islamic finance, finance and accounting concentrations. Before the second follow-up visit, the Panel was only provided with the CVs of one part-time and six full-time faculty members and during the second follow-up visit, the Panel learned that two of the full-time academic staff have recently resigned. The Panel also learned that no Marketing courses were offered in the second semester of the academic year 2018-2019 due to the lack of staff specialized in this area, and that the College is in the process of hiring two additional staff members to replace the two staff that have resigned. The Panel urges UCB to expedite the implementation of its Recruitment Plan of 2018-2019 to appoint three qualified and experienced faculty members in Management, Marketing and Islamic Finance. The Panel also urges UCB to address the high staff attrition rate (33% in the academic year 2018-2019). Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is not addressed.

Recommendation 2.4: *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 policies and procedures for faculty appraisal, which are documented in the Faculty Guidebook, and the HR Policies & Procedures Handbook. These policies and procedures were recently reviewed and updated in 2018-2019. The HoD evaluates the performance of each faculty member annually to identify the training programmes and professional development needed. During the first follow-up visit, there was not

enough evidence to support that faculty appraisal was being used in a systemic way to 'identify professional development needs, staff eligible for promotion and future leaders as a part of UCB succession strategy', as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017. Furthermore, staff attrition rate was high in the academic years 2012-2015. The progress report indicates that UCB has developed an exit survey 'to establish reasons for high turnover rates and attrition of staff'. The evidence provided includes a sample of exit surveys, which shows an overall high level of satisfaction with the level of support provided by UCB for its faculty to perform their role. Identified areas for improvement include induction, IT support, and financial management. However, as per the provided evidence, staff attrition rate was 33% in the academic year 2018-2019, which is considerably high. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 2.5: *develop and implement a mechanism to support students at-risk.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

The Progress Report indicates that the process and procedures for detecting at-risk students had been updated in 2017-2018 and that the Academic Advising Forms and templates were updated and circulated to all academic staff. These forms and templates are currently published on the University OneDrive Quality Management System. The Academic Advising Policy was also updated in October 2018, as well as the process and procedures for detecting at-risk students. As per the progress report, all published policies and practices concerning student advising and students at risk of academic failure are currently applicable to all undergraduate and postgraduate students. This has been effective since September 2018, although the review panel was of the view that UCB should 'implement an advising mechanism that differentiates the needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students, through the provision of some facilities geared specifically to the needs of the MBA programme', as indicated in the MBA review report of 2014. However, the Panel notes that the Academic Advising Policy includes few details and a section related to graduate students which states that 'UCB's intervention strategy will be considered on a case-by-case basis if students do not successfully complete the second module'. This intervention includes 'mentoring by academic staff' and 'assistance with academic or learning skills'.

As per the progress report and provided evidence, the Academic Department tracks and discusses in its formal Department Meetings the latest status of students at risk of academic failure. The Management Information System (MIS) also generates a 'Semester Statistical Guide' which is circulated to the newly established UEB to look at students' performance and take the necessary actions. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel was provided with UCB By-laws for the Award of the Master's Degree

document, which was recently approved by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees in March 2017. These By-laws include a section related to Academic Warning and Expulsion, which states that MBA students receive academic warnings if their CGPA is less than 3.00 and may be expelled if their CGPA is less than 2.7 for two consecutive semesters. Expelled students are allowed to be conditionally enrolled subject to the approval of the Department Council and based on the recommendation of their advisor. The evidence provided also includes a list of four students on their first and second probations. Interviewed MBA students were generally satisfied with the academic advising and supervision. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 2.6: *establish a mechanism to monitor and analyse usage of resources for strategic planning purposes.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The policy related to Information Communication Technology (ICT) learning resources was revised and updated in December 2018 to ensure that all aspects of ICT provision are included. The Policy includes a set of minimum expectations in terms of infrastructure and services provided for students and staff. The evidence provided includes ICT Learning Resources audits that were conducted in January and February 2019. As per the progress report, a Library and IT Committee (LITC) was established in 2018-2019 by merging the former Library Committee and IT Committee. The Committee is responsible for the oversight of ICT infrastructure and resourcing. The progress report also states that the VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation meets regularly with the Director of Administration and Finance to discuss resource needs and resolve resource gaps. However, the Panel noted during the second follow-up visit that the Library online resources are not tracked currently. The Panel also noted that the physical library resources are very limited. Hence, the Panel concludes that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 2.7: *explore ways in which data analysis can assist in developing an accurate image of the efficiency of the UCB's teaching and learning system.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel was provided with statistical reports related to admission, registration, course offering, students' CGPA that were submitted to HoDs for review and use. However, the Panel was not provided with sufficient evidence in relation to implementation, such as action plans based on the MIS reports and follow-up of these action plans. The progress report asserts that the MIS has been further extended and provides better tracking of students at risk of academic failure. It also indicates that student progression and achievement data are currently

scrutinised and approved in each semester by UEB. During the second follow-up visit interviews, the Panel was informed that the MIS reports are regularly circulated to the Director of Admission and Finance, the VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation, and the HoDs to inform decisions related to resourcing and employing part-time staff. The evidence provided included action plans based on the MIS generated reports and follow-up on implementation. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 2.8: *ensure an appropriate learning environment for an MBA programme.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The progress report indicates that the MBA programme includes a variety of formative and summative assessment tools, which include group work, debates, journal article analysis, real-world case studies and formal reports. It also clarifies that these tools are designed to ensure that students share their professional/work experience through debates and discussions related to business practices. During the second follow-up interviews with faculty and MBA students, it was confirmed that MBA students are often required to conduct individual and group research projects and that they are encouraged to present their projects at the 'University Research Working Paper Series of Presentations', which are arranged by the Scientific Research Council (SRC). However, none of the MBA students whom the Panel met had participated in these events. They were also of the view that the University's infrastructure and learning resources require improvements to cater better for their learning needs. The Panel was also informed during the interviews with faculty that the programme team is planning to introduce more extracurricular and independent learning activities. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

3. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates

This section evaluates the extent to which the MBA 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: *reconsider the graduate attributes of MBA students to pursue a closer philosophical alignment to the wider curriculum (teaching, learning, research) of the programme.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the second follow-up visit interviews with senior management and faculty, the Panel was informed that the graduate attributes are set at the institutional level and that the MBA programme aims and PILOs were revised at the department level based on the feedback received from the External Advisory Board. This was corroborated during the interview conducted with an advisory board member, as well as through the provided evidence. The five graduate attributes state that a UCB graduate will be 'Knowledgeable', 'Socially Responsible', 'Professional', 'Life-long Learner' and 'Collaborative'. The programme specification also includes a clear mapping between these attributes and the revised aims and PILOs. Leadership and Practical skills are emphasized in the revised programme aims and PILOs.

According to the revised programme aims, students are expected to 'understand the social and ethical responsibilities of managerial and leadership positions of a company and be able to practice them', and to 'be an effective leader in different organizational situations and settings', which are in line with the philosophy of the MBA that puts more emphasis on these traits. However, since the introduced changes in the programme aims, PILOs and teaching strategies are recent, it is too early to judge the impact of these changes on the wider curriculum. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 3.2: *adopt and implement a more nuanced and sophisticated definition of benchmarking in order that it might become an important tool in the quality assurance and enhancement of the MBA programme.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel was presented with a newly-developed Benchmarking Policy that was revised in 2016. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence referring to any benchmarking activities from 2014-2017. As per the

progress report, UCB's Benchmarking Policy was revised and updated again in November 2018. The Panel notes that it includes clear criteria for the selection of universities for benchmarking purposes. It also states that the main purpose of benchmarking is to ensure UCB programmes meet national and international standards including professional body and industry standards. As mentioned earlier in this Report, the evidence provided during the second follow-up visit includes two benchmarking reports for the MBA concentrations based on a desktop analysis of similar programmes that are offered by one local university and one international university. These reports highlight the similarities and differences in terms of credit hours, PILOs, courses available and the percentage of core and elective courses. The CILOs and the course contents are still not covered in the conducted benchmarking studies. However, the Panel was informed that formal benchmarking is conducted as part of the periodic review of the programme and for the approval of new programmes and courses. Senior management also pointed that the MBA Programme Review and Revalidation Panel that was formed by UCB included one external reviewer for benchmarking purposes. This was corroborated during the interview with the external reviewer who confirmed to the Panel that sufficient documents were provided prior to the meeting that took place on 24 April 2019 to discuss the proposed changes. These documents included the programme and course specifications and the results of the benchmarking studies.

As per the Benchmarking Policy, the Department submits its benchmarking proposals to QAAC for approval and once the proposals are approved, formal requests are sent to the selected universities to take part in the benchmarking process and submit the data requested by UCB benchmarking teams. The evidence provided includes one recent benchmarking proposal that was submitted and approved by the Chair of the QAAC in February 2019. The Panel is of the view that the submitted evidence is still insufficient to demonstrate full implementation of the recently revised Benchmarking Policy and to assess its impact on the programme academic standards. Hence, the Panel concludes that this recommendation is partially addressed

Recommendation 3.3: *adopt and implement a programme of both internal and external moderation for both the formative coursework and summative test/examination components of MBA student evaluation.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

As mentioned earlier in this Report, UCB internal and external moderation processes were significantly revised and improved. The moderation scope was extended to include coursework during the academic year 2018-2019. As per the progress report, the moderation processes that had been in operation since 2016, were limited to final examinations. Moreover, in the first follow-up visit, it was noted that UCB policies and

procedures did not include a clear description of the external moderation process and criteria for the selection of external moderators. UCB addressed these concerns by revising and updating the Assessment and Moderation Policy. The QAAC has also developed new moderation forms for the external pre-and-post assessment moderation. Furthermore, as indicated earlier in this Report, a newly-developed UCB Guidance for Assessment, Examination and Moderation Policy and an External Moderators Policy, have been developed. The Panel notes that the provided policies and procedures are detailed and comprehensive and that the pre-and post-assessment moderation forms require moderators to write their comments on these forms. Additionally, during the second follow-up visit interviews with faculty and senior management, they confirmed that the coursework and final examinations of all the courses that were offered in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2018-2019 were internally and externally moderated. This was corroborated during the interviews with the two external moderators that were appointed in the 2nd semester of the academic year 2018-2019 and through the provided evidence. The two moderators also confirmed that they reviewed a sample of examination scripts and clarified that UCB has clear criteria for the size of the selected sample, which varies based on the number of students. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 3.4: *engage in further training of faculty members on the alignment of learning outcomes as performative skills and the assessment tasks appropriate to showing the satisfactory achievement of those skills, be pursued.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

As mentioned earlier in this Report, UCB conducted several workshops on the use of innovative assessment practices, research informed teaching, the writing and the use of the ILOs, as well as, CILO-PILO mapping and the assessment alignment with CILOs in 2018-2019. Furthermore, during the second follow-up visit interviews, faculty expressed their high satisfaction with the workshops conducted, which helped them in updating the MBA course specifications and aligning the assessment tasks with the revised ILOs. They also pointed out to the newly developed policies, procedures and guidelines, which include the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Policy, the Assessment and Moderation Policy, UCB Guidance - Learning Outcomes and UCB Guidance - Assessment, Examination and Moderation. The Panel appreciates the recent efforts that were exerted by faculty and senior management to address the concerns raised in the MBA Review Report of 2014 and the first follow-up visit of 2017. However, the Panel is of the view that it is still too early to fully assess the impact of the introduced changes on the level of achievement of MBA students. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 3.5: *institute a strong differentiation in the work considered acceptable at undergraduate and postgraduate level.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The progress report states that ‘academic staff are encouraged through directives, policy guidance and workshops to demonstrate flexibility in the formative and summative assessments’. It also indicates that they are encouraged to reflect on their teaching and assessment strategies through peer-to-peer classroom observations. However, as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017, the MBA courses still ‘follow a rigid set of course assessment allocation of marks with summative assessment totalling up to 70% of the course grade and only 30% allocated to project/case study/assignment’, which is not the norm for postgraduate level courses. Furthermore, the Panel notes that UCB did not fully address the Panel’s concern in relation to ‘the dependence on one main textbook’ which ‘does not reflect positively on the level of the course and makes it closer to an undergraduate level course than a postgraduate one’, as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017. This is evident in the ‘Marketing Management’ course (MKT501) and the ‘Corporate and Managerial Finance’ course (FIN501). The structure of these two courses include the text-book chapters and the corresponding ILOs and assessment methods. While FIN501 only includes three additional reference books, MKT501 only includes one text-book. However, during the interviews with external moderators, they were generally satisfied with the level of achievement of MBA students. They were also of the view that there should be more emphasis on critical thinking skills and integration of knowledge at the MBA level. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 3.6: *develop and implement a policy to ensure the performance of MBA students is benchmarked against other reputable business schools in all facets of the programme.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The progress report indicates that UCB has revised and updated its Benchmarking Policy to ensure that the offered programmes are in line with national and international standards. As per the revised policy, the scope of benchmarking activities includes graduate attributes, ILOs, curriculum structures, course contents, teaching and learning, assessment, and moderation practices. The progress report also clarifies that external moderation helps to ensure that the students’ works meet the expected national and international standards. The Panel was provided with the newly developed External Moderators Policy, which aims ‘to ensure that assessment and student work is in line with, and comparable in standard to, institutions of higher education in Bahrain and abroad’. However, as noted earlier in this Report, the

implemented benchmarking did not cover all the expected aspects and it is still too early to fully assess the impact of the introduced changes on the level of achievement of MBA students. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

Recommendation 3.7: *institute a regular system of cohort analysis for the MBA programme.*

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel was of the view that the statistics provided were 'not sufficiently detailed to provide a holistic progression picture of the students' status' and 'to prepare a solid cohort analysis for decision-making related to student performance such as retention, concentration selection, student characteristics', as indicated in the first follow-up report of 2017. The progress report indicates that limited cohort analyses are conducted as part of the annual and periodic monitoring and reviews of UCB programmes as well as for the HEC annual reporting. It also clarifies that UEB is currently responsible for conducting complete cohort analyses in relation to student access, retention, attainment and progression. Moreover, the progress report indicates that UEB is also responsible for 'ensuring academic standards, by verification and approval of student achievement in line with the Qualifications Framework for credit volume at each NQF level of attainment'. The evidence provided includes minutes of meetings, UEB Policy, which states that student retention, attainment and progression are tracked and approved by UEB each semester. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

Recommendation 3.8: *conduct regular surveys of alumni and businesses, analyse and use results for improvements and innovation.*

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The progress report asserts that feedback related to UCB alumni and businesses is regularly gathered through the advisory board whose members include representatives from the industry, government and alumni. During interviews with faculty and senior management, the Panel was informed that the feedback of the advisory board was instrumental in the recently conducted revisions of the programme aims, ILOs and the teaching and learning methods. The Panel was also informed that UCB has revised the process for gathering evidence and analysing student feedback to address the Panel's concerns in relation to the regularity of the conducted surveys. Furthermore, the Panel learned that the Student Evaluation Questionnaire and UCB Graduate Exit Survey were recently revised by the QA manager and distributed in the 1st semester of the academic year 2018-2019. However, the Panel was not provided with sufficient evidence to demonstrate the regularity of

implementation of the used tools to gather feedback on alumni and businesses. It is also too early to assess the impact of the introduced changes on the programme academic standards. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance

This section evaluates the extent to which the MBA 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 MBA programme.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

As noted in the first follow-up report of 2017, UCB developed and revised a number of policies in 2013 and 2016. The Panel notes that most of these policies were revised and updated again in 2018 and 2019. The Terms of Reference (ToRs) of UCB standing committees were also recently revised and updated in 2018-2019. The progress report clarifies that UCB 'has overhauled its quality assurance infrastructure and policy framework' following the appointment of the current VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation in 2018, as mentioned earlier in this Report. It also states that 'the overhaul of the policy framework and academic infrastructure has been supported by further staffing realignment to ensure more targeted academic leadership'. The Panel notes with appreciation the improvement in the quality of the provided QA Policies and Framework Documentation.

During the first follow-up visit, it was noted that the implementation and monitoring of QA policies and procedures was inconsistent. The role of QAAC was also very limited and had little impact on the quality enhancement of the programmes and related services. In addition, there was a very limited number of qualified administrative staff to provide support for faculty members in carrying out their different tasks. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel noted that the role of the QAAC was significantly enhanced by appointing qualified administrative and academic staff to carry out certain tasks, as discussed in other parts of this Report. This addresses the main concern raised in the first follow-up report and the BQA review report of 2014 in relation to the implementation of QA policies, procedures and regulations in the management of the programme. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is addressed. The Panel also encourages UCB to sustain the achieved progress in these regards.

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: *Fully Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel was concerned that several key positions were held by one person and some of the assigned responsibilities were not carried out in an efficient and consistent manner. Furthermore, there was not sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there were marked changes or improvements in the programme's quality and academic standards based on the action taken. As per the progress report, a QA Office headed by a newly appointed QA Manager was established and a Quality Assurance officer was appointed to assist the QA manager and to act as a clerk to all standing committees. The progress report also indicates that the standing committee structures were revised to give the QAAC a central role in QA management and to ensure better monitoring of QA policies and procedures, as well as improvement plans. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of the President and VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation were revised to ensure that they have full oversight of QA standards. Two external academic consultants participated in the revision process to ensure alignment with BQA/NQF requirements. Based on the provided Governance Policies and Framework Documentation and QA Policies and Framework Documentation, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel had noted that no comprehensive periodic review for the programme was conducted. The Panel had also noted that policy related to the reviews of programmes did not include detailed procedures for the periodic review and urged UCB to 'develop clear criteria for the periodic review of the programmes and conduct these reviews on a regular basis'. According to the progress report and evidence provided, UCB revised its QA and Management Policies and Procedures. The progress report also states that the Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy was revised and updated in October 2018 to be in line with the requirements of the HEC and the BQA. As per the revised Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy, the periodic review of each programme is expected to be carried out every four years and to include benchmarking studies, market needs analysis, and the feedback collected from internal and external stakeholders. This Policy also includes a detailed process of the selection of an external reviewer for each programme undergoing a periodical review.

The evidence provided includes a filled report form submitted by one external reviewer. However, the Panel notes that the external reviewer report is in the form of questions and answers, which are very brief and general, and it covers all the four programmes and concentrations offered by UCB. During the interviews conducted in the second follow-up visit, the Panel learned that the review and revalidation panel that was formed by UCB included senior management, faculty and one external reviewer to discuss the rationale for proposed changes to the programme, entry requirements, the programme structure and year-on-year progression, PILOs, the mapping of CILOs to PILOs, teaching and learning, research projects, assessment, and student support. As per the provided evidence, this review and revalidation was a half-day event that was conducted on 24 April 2019. The provided evidence also includes a report on this event, which includes a list of recommendations and conditions, as well as a commentary for each condition and recommendation.

The Panel learned during the second follow-up visit interviews, that the programme team is currently working on addressing the recommendations raised during the review and revalidation event, which has also incorporated the conducted benchmarking studies, and the feedback collected from the programme advisory board. The action plan provided to the Panel was incomplete and did not include the responses of the HoD and the Chair of the QAAC, which is understandable since the review and revalidation of the MBA programme was only recently conducted. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

As per the progress report, the main purpose of the annual programme review is to ensure the currency of the programme, the appropriateness of the ILOs, and the effectiveness of the teaching, learning and assessment processes. It also states that the revision of the Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy was conducted to ‘create a continuous cycle of programme review, with annual monitoring’. The Policy specifies the purpose of annual reviews, roles and responsibilities of parties involved, and expected outcomes in terms of annual review reports, and the follow-up and implementation of improvement plans.

As per the second follow-up visit interviews with senior management and provided evidence, HoDs are responsible for the annual monitoring and the completion of the annual review reports, which are expected to include end-of-semester course reviews, internal and external moderation reports, and the recommendations of the advisory board. The QAAC is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the action plans based on the annual reviews and for assessing the progress achieved.

The evidence provided includes the annual review reports of 2017 and 2018, which were incomplete and unsigned by the VP for Academic Affairs. Some important parts of the report were also listed as not applicable, such as student completion rates and difficulties encountered in the management of the programme and the achievement of the programme objectives. Related reports and documentation were not attached and provided. Similar comments were raised by the Panel in the first follow-up report of 2017. During the second follow-up visit, the Panel was informed that these reports were part of the annual reporting documents submitted to the HEC. The Panel was also informed that the QAAC has developed a new template for the annual reviews in line with the revised Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy. The revised template includes sections related to benchmarking exercises and the feedback received from students, advisory boards and moderators, as well as, a commentary on the progress achieved with the programme improvement plan. Hence, the Panel concludes that this recommendation is partially addressed.

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

During the first follow-up visit, the Panel noted that surveys were not conducted for two consecutive years due to the shortage of administrative staff. To address this matter, the responsibility for analysing UCB surveys was assigned to the newly established QA Office. During the second follow-up visit interviews, the Panel was informed that the newly appointed QA manager revised all the administered surveys in line with the National Student Survey (NSS) in the United Kingdom, which is available online. These revisions were based on the recommendation of the VP for Academic Affairs, Quality and Accreditation. The provided evidence indicates that the Student Evaluation Questionnaire and UCB Graduate Exit Survey were distributed in the 1st semester of the academic year 2018-2019 and the feedback of employers was gathered during the advisory board meetings.

As per the revised Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy and the progress report, the data scrutinised for the annual review purpose includes student feedback, internal and external moderation reports and the recommendations of the advisory boards. However, as noted earlier in this Report, the revised annual review template, which incorporates an analysis and action plans based on internal and external stakeholders' feedback, has not been used yet. Hence, the Panel concludes that this recommendation is partially addressed.

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

As per the first follow-up report of 2017, 'no evidence was provided on holistic analysis of the students and alumni surveys' or 'to indicate that employers' surveys have been conducted in the last 3-5 years'. During the second follow-up visit interviews, the Panel learned that the process for gathering evidence and analysing student feedback has been changed to address this recommendation. Student surveys are currently distributed and collected by the Registrar, and the QA Office analyses the surveys and sends the results to HoDs and the QAAC. These results are also incorporated in the end-of-semester course reports and are discussed at Department Meetings. The evidence provided includes thorough analyses of the Student Evaluation Questionnaires and UCB Graduate Exit Surveys that were distributed in the 1st semester of the academic year 2018-2019. The action plans based on the recently distributed and analysed surveys were not provided, however, the Panel learned during the second follow-up visit interviews that these plans will be incorporated in the newly developed template of the annual review reports.

The progress report indicates that regular meetings are currently held with the Student Council President to allow student participation in the decision-making process and that 'every Academic Department has held an External Advisory Board, providing complete institutional coverage'. The progress report also indicates that the feedback of the advisory boards has led to significant changes in programme specifications and its learning, teaching and assessment approach. The Panel notes that the provided minutes of the advisory board are thorough and include several proposed actions to be taken by the programme team. The Panel also learned during the second follow-up visit interviews that the QA Office is currently developing an alumni first-destination survey, in line with NSS surveys. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this recommendation is partially addressed.

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: *Fully Addressed*

The University's HR Policies and Procedures were revised and updated in 2018. The revised HR Handbook clearly describes the appraisal process, which includes 'identifying personal development needs and providing internal workshops on a range of academic matters to enable overall staff development'. As per the progress

report, 'all academic staff are appraised before the start of the new academic year, and a reflection on past achievement, including research output and conference attendance, is reviewed, with a discussion and plan for future development'. This was corroborated during the second follow-up visit interviews and through the provided evidence. During the second follow-up visit interviews with senior management, the Panel was also informed that in the academic year 2017-2018, the Academic Research Committee (ARC) was replaced by a new SRC, whose ToRs include research development oversight and faculty professional development. The evidence provided includes a list of workshops that were conducted in the last two academic years, workshop materials and a sample of filled workshop event feedback forms. This addresses the Panel's main concerns, which were raised in the first follow-up report of 2017 in relation to the lack of evidence related to the implementation of the newly developed mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of workshops/seminars. Moreover, faculty members expressed their high level of satisfaction with the workshops conducted by the QAAC and SRC, which included workshops on the NQF and research informed teaching. Hence, the Panel is of view that this recommendation is fully addressed.

5. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own progress report, Programme first follow-up visit 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 Master of Business Administration programme offered by the University College of Bahrain has made 'Adequate Progress'.

Appendix 1: Judgement per recommendation.

Judgement	Standard
Fully Addressed	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.
Partially Addressed	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.
Not Addressed	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
Good progress	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. No further follow-up visit is required.
Adequate progress	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. No further follow-up visit is required.
Inadequate progress	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,