National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

# Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

# Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance**

**College of Business Administration**

**University of Bahrain**

**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 1 – 3 December 2014**

HC047-C2-R047

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AACSB | Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business |
| AIMS | Assessment Information Management System |
| AoL | Assessment of Learning |
| BSBF | Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance |
| CILO | Course Intended Learning Outcomes |
| CoB | College of Business Administration |
| DAC | Departmental Accreditation Committee |
| DAR | Deanship of Admission and Registration |
| DHR | Directorate of Higher Education Reviews |
| ILO | Intended Learning Outcome |
| MCQs | Multiple Choice Questions |
| MIS | Management Information Systems |
| NQF | National Qualification Framework |
| OBE | Outcome Based Education |
| PAC | Programme Advisory Committee |
| PCAP | Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice |
| PEO | Programme Educational Objectives |
| PILO | Programme Intended Learning Outcomes |
| QAAC | Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center |

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| QQA | National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SAC | Students Advisory Committee |
| SER | Self-Evaluation Report |
| UILO | University Intended Learning Outcomes |
| UoB | University of Bahrain |

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# 1.    The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

## 1.1    The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

*Indicator 1:* **The Learning Programme**

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

*Indicator 2:* **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

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

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

*Indicator 4:* **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**
*The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.*

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

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

**Table 1: Criteria for Judgements**

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

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

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Business Administration was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 1-3 December 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the College, these are: Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC); Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF); Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BSMK); Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSBM) and Master in Business Administration (MBA).

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF) based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the University of Bahrain (UoB), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

UoB was notified by the DHR/QQA in May 2014 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of the programmes offered by its College of Business Administration with the site visit taking place on 1-3 December 2014. In preparation for the review, UoB conducted its self-evaluation of all the programmes offered by the College and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date in September 2014.

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

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

(i)     analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit

(ii)    analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)

(iii)   analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

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

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

## 1.3    Overview of the College of Business Administration

The College of Business Administration (CoB) was reconstituted in 1991 after the reorganization of the Gulf Polytechnic (founded in 1981) into a number of colleges and departments. Currently there are four departments within the College: Department of Accounting, Department of Economics and Finance, Department of Management and Marketing and the Department of Islamic Banking which was recently established in November 2014. The College offers six academic programmes; these are the Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC), Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF), Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSBM), Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BSMK), Bachelor of Science in Islamic Banking and Finance (BSIBF) and the Master in Business Administration (MBA). For the academic year 2014-2015, there are 88 academic staff members supported by and 26 administrative  staff members. The number of students enrolled in the College, in the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, totaled 5,227 students. The College of Business Administration is currently in the final accreditation stage of Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB International). Annual visits have

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taken place by the assigned mentor for evaluation purposes and advice since 2011. An evaluation visit by the AACSB is scheduled to take place in 2015-2016.

## 1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance

The Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance is offered by the Department of Economics and Finance. The Department of Economics was instituted in 1992 and it was not until 1998 that its name was changed to the Department of 'Economics and Finance'. The Department started offering the BSBF programme in February 1998. The Department has 45 academic staff members who are supported by three administrative staff members, in addition to 15 support staff at college level. For the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, the number of students enrolled in the programme totalled 1441 students. To date, there are 1504 graduates from the BSBF programme.

## 1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

**Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance**

| Indicator | Judgement |
|---|---|
| 1: The Learning Programme | Satisfies |
| 2: Efficiency of the Programme | Satisfies |
| 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates | Satisfies |
| 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance | Satisfies |
| **Overall Judgement** | **Confidence** |

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## 2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

2.1 The mission of the Department of Economics and Finance is 'to provide students with a high quality and state-of-the-art education in banking and finance that is intellectually rigorous and practically oriented'. This mission statement is closely aligned to the college's mission statement, the university's mission and its strategic goals, as well as the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) which emphasize critical thinking, decision making, and communication skills as vital components of education in Banking and Finance. During interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that the PEOs were revised at the beginning of 2013-2014 academic year following a benchmarking exercise with AACSB accredited programmes. The Panel notes that the revised PEOs are consistent with UoB strategic goals and the educational needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the region. The Panel appreciates that a clear academic planning framework is in place and that the PEOs are well mapped to the department's mission and to UoB's mission and strategic goals.

2.2 The BSBF curriculum comprises 128 credit hours divided into university requirements (11 credits), general education requirements (30), college requirements (42 credits) and major requirements (30 credits), and 15 credits for the courses of either minor or for the major electives of the single track. The university requirements Human Rights Principles (LAW 107) and Modern History of Bahrain & Citizenship (HIST 122) are appreciated for equipping graduates with the language, and social and legal awareness required to operate within Bahrain and the Gulf region. In its interviews with programme faculty, the Panel was informed that the BSBF curriculum was revised in July 2013 in light of the AACSB accreditation standards to allow for the introduction of five major/minor tracks in Accounting, Economics, International Business, Management, and Marketing, respectively, in addition to a major single track in Banking and Finance. In addition, a capstone graduation project course (FIN 499) is included in the revised curriculum, and which will be offered in the next academic year. The Panel notes with appreciation that these structural revisions in the curriculum are appropriate and consistent with the needs of the local and the regional economy. However, whilst the Panel acknowledges that these changes have clearly broadened the breadth of the curriculum, the Panel notes that students are no longer exposed to Monetary Economics (ECON 341) or International Economics (ECON 440) courses within the core structure of the revised curriculum. The Panel finds that this would lead to insufficient direct coverage of theory and professional practice in Banking *via* existing core courses in year two and three of the programme to ensure progression on a year-on-year basis in the Banking component of the programme. The Panel

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explored this issues with faculty members who indicated that the key theoretical and practical topics relating to the Banking component of the programme are currently covered in finance courses in years two and three of the programme. Furthermore, faculty members explained that progression in all core courses is achieved *via* a system of course prerequisites and a careful selection of textbooks used in these course. Although noting these points the Panel is of the opinion that there is a need for a separate core course in the theory and practice of Banking, alongside current Finance courses, to ensure a deepening of students' knowledge in this key component of the curriculum. The Panel recommends that the Department include a separate core course in theory and practice of banking to ensure students' progression in this key component of the programme. The Panel explored with faculty the mechanisms in place to ensure an appropriate balance between theory and practice, and between knowledge and skills in the curriculum. The Panel learned that faculty members employ a range of mechanisms, including case studies, individual projects, presentations and company visits, as well as work-based learning activities to ensure students are exposed to theory and practice, as wells as to knowledge and skills in the programme. The Panel appreciates that relevant mechanisms are implemented to ensure an appropriate balance within the curriculum between knowledge and skills, and between theory and practice.

2.3 The Panel examined a sample of BSBF course syllabus forms and portfolios and noted that these documents are well designed and well prepared containing detailed and relevant information on each course's aims, Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), teaching and assessment methods of each category of ILOs, mapping of CILOs to PILOs, weekly lecture topics, as well as key textbooks and academic journals. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that the programme teaching team and course co-ordinators have been responsible for writing the course syllabus forms. The Panel also learned that minor amendments to a course content is normally made by the course coordinator in discussion with the teaching team at any time, whilst major structural changes require the approval of the Department Council. The Panel noted that faculty members have included additional case studies and practical projects to supplement the teaching material and have periodically carried out informal benchmarking on their respective courses in order to keep up with current trends in their subject area. The Panel is of the opinion that these arrangements are effective and appropriate. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that the course syllabus forms have been distributed to them and they are fully aware of course aims, ILOs and key textbooks. The Panel appreciates that the syllabus is well documented and meets the norms of the disciplinary field and has appropriate reference to current professional practice.

2.4 The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are clearly stated and are divided into the conventional four categories of A: knowledge and understanding, B: subject–

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specific skills, C: thinking skills and D: general transferable skills. The Panel notes that the PILOs are appropriate to the level of the degree and are effectively mapped to the Outcome Domains, the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs), and to the University Indented learning Outcomes (UILOs). From site visit interview, it was evident to the Panel that the programme teaching team are aware of PILOs and linkages to the PEOs. Furthermore, the Panel learned from a sample of current students that they too have a fairly good awareness of the programme's aims and learning outcome. The Panel appreciates that appropriate programme ILOs are in place and are well-mapped to the BSBF programme aims and PEOs.

2.5     Each course syllabus form includes a list of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), which the Panel finds to be at an appropriate level, clearly defined, and mapped well to the PILOs. The Panel learned from interviews conducted with faculty members that, in line with the internal quality assurance guidelines, the CILOs are determined with close reference to the PILOs and are mapped to the PILOs. The Panel also interviewed a sample of students and noted that they are aware of key CILOs as explained by the faculty members, and described in course syllabus forms. The mapping of the BSBF CILOs to the PILOs is clearly outlined in the SER. The Panel appreciates that appropriate course ILOs are in place and are carefully mapped to the programme ILOs.

2.6     There is a well-established work based learning programme in operation *via* the FIN 299 Internship course. This course is designed to ensure students are exposed to work experience by placing them in a work environment for 8-9 weeks with a minimum of 200 working hours. The Panel is of the opinion that this course is an important component of the BSBF programme and believes that it plays a key role in exposing students to current practice of Banking and Finance. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that the Internship provides them with the opportunity to apply what they learned in a real work environment. The Panel appreciates that a compulsory work-based component is included in the curriculum and finds that it plays a pivotal role, as a key mechanism, for ensuring a better balance is achieved between theory and practice and also between knowledge and skills in the curriculum. However, the Panel notes that this course is not credit bearing and is not formally assessed for the purpose of assigning a grade. The practical training is evaluated as either Satisfactory, Unsatisfactory or Incomplete. The Panel found in its interviews with a considerable number of faculty and management staff that the matter of awarding credits for this two month period of work in the final year of study was problematic. The range of work experience varied significantly between individual students, as did the quality of supervisor reports, although generally favourable thus preventing a standard against which a credit could be awarded. The Panel recommends that the College further explore available options for overcoming

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abovementioned challenges so that the Internship be made credit-bearing to better reflect its key role in the curriculum.

2.7 There is a university-wide document entitled 'Regulations of Study and Examinations at University of Bahrain' which was approved by the University Council in October 2013 and is made available to all faculty members. The SER states that, in line with the guidelines of this document, a wide range of teaching methods are employed including lectures, interactive teaching methods, research projects, case-based learning methods and problem solving. The use of ICT is also encouraged, however, e-resources are not yet fully integrated into the curriculum. During the site visit, the Panel noted that each course syllabus form shows how each type of CILO is to be taught on a weekly basis. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel indicated that, in line with the programme improvement plan, course outlines have recently been revised to include the diverse teaching methods that will be implemented throughout the semester. Faculty members were able to discuss various teaching methods with close reference to CILOs and PILOS . The Panel also interviewed a sample of current students who confirmed that they have experienced various teaching methods listed in the course syllabus forms and, by and large, found these to be relevant to their learning experiences. The Panel was pleased to learn that in some courses, students are provided with the opportunity to interact with students from an international university *via* Skype and video teleconferencing, and engage in comparative studies that enhance their knowledge of international business environments. The Panel appreciates that a variety of teaching methods, relevant to the BSBF programme are employed to support the attainment of programme aims and learning outcomes. The Panel also notes with appreciation that the Department involves experts from the eminent corporations and banks to hold seminars and workshops for the students in which they present their real world experiences and give recommendations to the students . However, the Panel is of the view that this adoption of a range of teaching methods is to be encouraged by its written inclusion into a stand-alone Teaching and Learning Policy for the College. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a Teaching and Learning Policy, appropriate to the adopted philosophy and pedagogy of Outcomes Based Education and ensure that all staff are trained and assisted in the implementation of this policy.

2.8 Assessment regulations and procedures are detailed in the 'Regulations of Study and Examinations at the University of Bahrain', and in the 'Assessment, Grading and Moderation' policy. These regulations the use of Assessment can include a mixture of techniques including midterm examinations, projects, term papers, case studies, quizzes, etc. According to the SER there are suitable arrangements in place for assessing students' achievements *via* summative and formative assessments with clear criteria for marking and provision for prompt student feedback. The Panel

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noted, from a sample of course syllabus forms inspected, that the assessment methods of each category of CILOs and each weekly lecture topic are clearly identified. These assessment methods include case studies, assignments, and reviews of articles, quizzes, a mid-term and a final examination. The Panel notes that the assessment regulations specify the weight of final examinations at 40%, whereas the other tasks share the other 60% of the final grade. Overall, the Panel views these assessment methods to be appropriate for assessing CILOs. During interviews conducted with faculty, the Panel noted that faculty members do indeed use a reasonable range of assessment methods to assess CILOs. Formative assessments are carried out *via* student's presentation and receive prompt verbal or written feedback . However, the Panel notes that traditional mid-term and final examinations remain the key assessment methods in the programme. The Panel is of the opinion that effective and regular formative assessment is key for improving student's learning experience and their performance in summative assessments. The Panel acknowledges that the College recognizes the importance of formative assessment, as stated in the recently implemented Assessment Strategy 'A policy of using formative assessments should be specified and attached to this strategy'. Another issue noted by the Panel is the notion of norm referenced assessment, i.e. measuring a student's performance against the cohort, rather than simply the criteria for the task, runs counter to the philosophy of OBE and criterion referenced assessment. The Panel finds the provision for an 'Assessment, Grading and Moderation' policy to be a useful departure point towards OBE assessment and moderation requirements. However, the Panel recommends that the Department supplement the current Assessment Strategy with appropriate policies and procedures, to bring it into line to reflect the pedagogy implicit within the adoption of Outcomes Based Education by the College, such as a shift in emphasis from norm referenced to criteria referenced assessment and the significant role of formative assessment in achieving this goal.

2.9     Appropriate procedures are in place for the grading and return of assessment results to students. The University Council Decision mandates that all assessments should be returned to students with clear comments and a model answer. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that assessments were returned 'within a week', and that they can request a re-mark of the final examination *via* an appeal process. The Panel notes that, all assessment instruments include clear criteria for marking and each assessment is accompanied by a rubric for students in approaching assignments and for staff in marking them. The adoption of marking matrices in courses is a key component of the OBE system and is commended by the Panel. In addition, an anti-Plagiarism Policy is in place  and is published through the Deanship of Students Affairs booklets. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are informed about assessment and plagiarism policies during the induction programme. The Panel appreciates that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the reliability and fairness of  grading students' achievements.

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

- A clear academic planning framework is in place and the programme aims are are well mapped to the department's mission and to the university mission and strategic goals.
- The university requirements Human Rights Principles and Modern History of Bahrain & Citizenship equip graduates with the language, and social and legal awareness required to operate within Bahrain and the Gulf region.
- The introduction of major and minor tracks in the curriculum is appropriate and consistent with the needs of the local and the regional economy.
- Relevant mechanisms are implemented to ensure an appropriate balance within the curriculum between knowledge and skills, and between theory and practice.
- The syllabus meets the norms of the disciplinary field and has appropriate reference to current professional practice.
- The programme intended learning outcomes are appropriate for the level of the degree and are well-mapped well to the programme aims and educational objectives.
- Appropriate course intended learning outcomes are in place and are carefully mapped to the programme intended learning outcomes.
- A compulsory work-based component is included in the curriculum which plays a pivotal role in ensuring a better balance between theory and practice and between knowledge and skills in the curriculum.
- A variety of teaching methods, relevant to the programme, are employed to support the attainment of programme aims and learning outcomes.
- The involvement of experts from the corporations and banks to hold seminars and workshops provides the students with real world experiences.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the reliability and fairness of grading students' achievements.

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

- include a separate core course in theory and practice of banking to ensure year-on-year progression in this key component of the programme
- explore available options so that the Internship be made credit-bearing to better reflect its key role in the curriculum
- develop and implement a teaching and learning policy, appropriate to the adopted philosophy and pedagogy of Outcomes Based Education and ensure that all staff are trained and assisted in the implementation of this policy
- supplement the current Assessment Strategy with appropriate policies and procedures, to bring it into line to reflect the pedagogy implicit within the adoption of Outcomes Based Education by the College.

## 2.12 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme.**

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# 3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

3.1 Admission to the BSBF programme follows the university-wide admission policy for undergraduate studies. The admission policy and associated procedures, are published on the university website and in the university Catalogue. In terms of the policy, admission to the BSBF programme requires a minimum score of 70% in high school. Students who have a secondary school grade of less than 90% in English are required to complete a one-semester English language orientation course before joining the programme. The Panel appreciates that a General Aptitude Test is conducted as part of the admission requirements. This is particularly important since the university admits students from 11 different secondary educational systems. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the university admission policy is periodically reviewed based on students' performance in the academic programmes. The Panel appreciates that the admission policy and procedures are clear, widely published and periodically revised.

3.2 Overall the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources. The University requirements of a pass rate of 70% or higher for the high school diploma, the language requirements and an aptitude test, are deemed by the Panel to be adequate to recruit students appropriate for the BSBF programme. Evidence of the appropriateness of the students' profile to the BSBF programme may be concluded from the employment rate based on the student tracking survey. Further evidence was obtained from both the regular and random meetings by Panel members with the students, in which they said that they had no specific problems with the programme. The Panel is of the view that the large diversity in the type of student accepted (type of school, language, education system, and student evaluation system), provides a sound reason for the adoption of a university basic education (preparation) year that includes English language, Math, Computer skills, and other self-development courses for students who show weaknesses in the skills required for programmes presented by the College of Business. The Panel learned during interviews that the University, as part of its strategic planning initiatives, has established a committee to develop a foundation year programme to prepare students for university programmes. The Panel encourages the implementation of this initiative.

3.3 There are clear procedures for the distribution of responsibilities in the hierarchy of the Department. The Department Chairperson holds overall responsibility for the management of the programme and basically spearheads assigned responsibilities within the department through nine different committees, which meet on a regular

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basis. The faculty members in the Department are involved in decision-making through the Departmental committees that consider almost every academic and administrative matter, from class timetables, textbooks, the curriculum, recruitment and promotion. This was confirmed during site visit interviews with faculty members. The Panel appreciates the clarity of the lines of accountability and the wide participation of programme faculty in the programme management. The Panel also notes the existence of coordinators for academic issues such as courses and textbooks, to enhance the management of the programme. However, the Panel finds that too great a number of departmental committees can involve individual faculty in time that could be spent more productively. Nevertheless, recognizing the importance of some committees, the Panel suggests that the Department investigates as to whether the roles and duties of certain committees could be merged.

3.4     According to the SER, the Department of Economics and Finance has a total of 45 academic staff: 4 Professors, 6 associate Professors, 16 Assistant Professors, 4 Lecturers, 8 Teaching Assistants and 7 part-time lecturers. From the CVs provided and site visit interviews, the Panel notes with appreciation that the academic staff are suitably qualified and have an appropriate range of academic qualifications and specializations required to teach on the BSBF programme. However, the Panel notes that the staff to student ratio is almost 1:40, which is higher than 1:35 standard set by UoB, and which the Panel finds to be undesirable in the longer term. The shortage of academic staff is recognized by the Department. During interviews, the Panel was informed that this issue is addressed by the Department through the offering of scholarships for programme faculty members to pursue their doctorate degrees, and the ongoing recruitment of suitably qualified academic staff. The Panel notes that there are currently three faculty members on scholarship, and that five new faculty members have been recruited in the academic year 2014-2015. The Panel acknowledges the Department's efforts in alleviating the shortage in faculty members and recommends that the Department develop and implement a definite recruitment plan for the next two years, supported by numbers and dates, to address the shortage in academic staff in the short and medium term. The Panel examined the list of recent and current academic research publications and noted that many faculty members are actively engaging in research and that the research profile is satisfactory. The Panel recommends that the Department introduce a supported research plan to motivate active researchers to continue their research effort and to encourage (through some type of recognition) the faculty members who publish their research in high impact international journals.

3.5     The Department has a well-established, systemic approach for recruitment, scrutiny, selection and appointment of new staff. The Department has two committees, a Faculty Selection (Recruitment) Committee and an Academic Promotions Committee, exclusively for taking care of these activities. There are comprehensive

written and approved 'Academic Promotion Regulations' of the University Council Resolution, which make promotion in the University a structured process. The Panel has viewed a sample of the minutes of meetings of the Recruitment Committee, from which the Panel can safely conclude that the process is transparent. The promotion system, as explained in the SER starts with the College Promotion Committee and ends with the University Council and is appropriate and has built-in safeguards. For the academic year 2013-14 the College had five promotions from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor position. The Panel has seen a sample of the College Promotion Committee minutes and is satisfied with the process. The Panel appreciates that clear and transparent procedures for the recruitment, promotion and retention of academic staff are in place and are implemented consistently. The system of staff appraisals currently involves only student evaluations on a semester basis. The Panel learned in its interviews with faculty members that a comprehensive evaluation of academic staff performance is done only at the time of contract renewal, and promotion for non-Bahraini staff. There is thus scope for the introduction of a system of annual appraisals of all faculty members. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement formal mechanisms for the annual appraisal of academic staff, including a system for peer-reviews. The feedback from this appraisal can be used to support an appeal for promotion, the development of a teaching portfolio as well as the identification of professional development needs.

3.6    The University has a functioning Management Information System (MIS) with components for Online Registration, Timetable Preparation, Online Advising, E-learning and Quality assurance . The SER describes the Online Registration System in detail, and during the on-site visit, staff in the Deanship of Admission and Registration Section described the registration process and the processes for maintaining student records with respect to admissions and registrations, faculty time-tabling, examination marks entry and processing of results. During interviews, the Panel learned that, subject to password compliance, faculty members are able to extract the information needed to manage the learning process, including timetabling, the submission of marks and student advising. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they have restricted access to the system *via* a secured login protocol and are able to access their examination results and academic records online. The Panel observed a physical demonstration of the MIS during the campus tour and noticed that there are sufficient security features to ensure the integrity of the system. Interviews with some support staff and academics confirmed that the reports they receive from the system are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective communication and decision-making. The Panel appreciates that the Management Information System is adequate for the purpose of informed decision-making and is subject to appropriate controls to ensure the security of the system.

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3.7    The SER describes the procedures in place to ensure the security of learner records. The University has appropriate policies and procedures to ensure the security of records. The Panel notes that both hard-copy and electronic copies of all critical records are maintained at different levels by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and in the Department. This was also confirmed during site visit interviews and the campus tour. In its interviews with the Information Technology (IT) Centre staff, the Panel was assured that records are password-protected and access to the records and the authority to add to or alter records is strictly limited to appropriate parties. There are prescribed retention periods for records and back-ups are done automatically on a monthly basis. Moreover, the University has a Disaster Recovery System. In addition, the Information Technology Centre executes an electronic back-up every semester. The Panel is satisfied that, on the basis of the written evidence, a review of relevant files and the on-site visit, learner records are secure and results are accurate.

3.8    UoB has a purpose-built campus that meets the needs of staff and students and supports their academic activities. The facilities available to the College include classrooms, computer laboratories, staff offices and multipurpose halls. The University library is adequately resourced with reading spaces, computers, books, online catalogue and digital library. During the tour of the facilities the Panel visited two lecture venues and noted that the equipment required for lectures is adequate. The Panel also visited a computer laboratory and noted that the College of Business has four computer laboratories, with 145 computing stations equipped with suitable hardware and software. The Panel finds the computer requirements of students to be adequately addressed. The visit to the library also confirmed that the range of textbook, journals and e-resources are appropriate for the programme needs. The Panel appreciates that the UoB campus and the College of Business Administration building provide an excellent learning environment. However, from the information provided, and during the campus tour, it is clear that there is a need to expand the available lecture venues. The problems relating to the ability to expand capacity due to the limited budget were explained to the Panel during different interviews. The current constraints facing the College of Business, where funding for infrastructural expansion and the employment of additional faculty is limited, gives an added incentive in the eyes of the Review Panel for a serious shift and engagement with e-learning (see section 3.4). The Panel recommends that the Department fully integrate e-learning resources to address the limitation in lecture venues and alleviate the shortage of faculty members.

3.9    The SER documents the tracking system for the usage of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources. At a meeting with administrative staff it was confirmed that detailed tracking records are available and reports are generated relating to the usage of these facilities. The Panel found evidence of an effective monitoring system that provides

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data on the usage of laboratories; the College keeps a daily schedule of every laboratory's usage as they are normally used for computing sessions for most of the courses . The e-learning centre is responsible for tracking the use of e-resources and reports are provided for departments upon request. The Panel acknowledges that the tracking system is adequate for the evaluation of the utilization of the Department's resources.

3.10   The range of support services available to students is detailed in the SER. Student guidance and support is provided through the Deanship of Student Affairs including training and development workshops in diverse areas such as leadership, computer literacy, scientific report writing and peer learning. The Student Advice and Guidance Department provides a number of services through its 28 staff members, including social, psychological and career counselling, disciplinary matters and character building. The UoB Library contains 59 staff members (14 are professional librarians) of which 31 staff members are located at the Central Library. The computer laboratories also have dedicated technicians who are assigned to support students with the use of the web portal where essential e-resources are housed. This was confirmed during the site visit by the Panel. Laboratory support is appropriate to the needs of staff and students, including a help-desk, as documented in the SER and confirmed in interviews with administrative staff. The Panel learned during interviews that students are generally complimentary about the support systems in place. The Panel appreciates that appropriate student support is in place to provide extensive support to students and enhance their learning experience.

3.11   The Deanship of Student Affairs organizes an induction day for the newly-admitted students at the beginning of each academic year. The induction programme includes an overview of the academic programmes, rules and regulations and the social and educational services, as well as the location of buildings and facilities. This was confirmed during onsite interviews with staff and students. Students interviewed by the Panel reported favourably on the value of the induction day, and that it was very helpful in preparing them for their studies. The Panel notes that a survey conducted by the Deanship to evaluate the effectiveness of the 2012-2013 induction day revealed overall satisfaction with the orientation programme. The Panel also notes that students made several recommendations to improve the induction day, many of which were implemented in the 2013-2014 academic year. The Panel appreciates that a well-developed induction programme is provided for newly admitted students.

3.12   The Department implements the institutional 'Academic Advising Framework' that details the responsibilities of academic advisors and the processes for tracking the students' academic progress.  During interviews with academic advisors, the Panel was informed that all students are assigned an academic advisor at the beginning of their studies, and are required to meet with their advisors at least once every

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semester. The tracking of students' progress is done by the Department in collaboration with the Deanship of Admission and Registration, to timely identify and provide support for at-risk students. Students with a GPA lower than 2.0 are identified and requested to meet with their advisors who recommend a number of intervention measures such as help sessions, peer-tutoring sessions and extra-tutorial classes. In addition, the Counselling and Guidance Unit (under the Deanship of Student Affairs) offers several programmes to support the students' academic progress and social welfare. The Department has recently set up a committee in September 2014 to enhance the students at risk. The Panel acknowledges that the Department has an adequate system and processes in place to identify and support at-risk students.

3.13    The Panel notes with appreciation the extensive array of informal out-of-class activities that the university has in place to expand student experiences and knowledge, including the many student societies, the career day and the regular workshops on a wide range of topics.  The student societies and clubs, cultural and social activities, sports and art fall under the auspices of the Student Activities Department (within the Deanship of Student Affairs), while the Training and Development Department conducts a wide range of workshops on Saturday mornings. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated their satisfaction with the opportunities provided to them to engage in informal learning experiences beyond the classroom. The Panel appreciates that a wide range of activities and resources for informal learning are provided to the programme students to expand their knowledge and experiences.

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

- The admission policy and procedures are comprehensive, clear, widely published and periodically revised.
- A General Aptitude Test is conducted as part of admission requirement
- There are clear lines of accountability and wide participation of faculty members in the programme management.
- The academic staff are suitably qualified and have an appropriate range of specializations to teach on the programme.
- Clear and transparent procedures for the recruitment, promotion and retention of academic staff are in place and are implemented consistently.
- The Management Information System is effective for the purpose of informed decision-making and is subject to appropriate controls to ensure the security of the system.
- The University provides excellent and sufficient facilities to fulfil the teaching and learning needs of the faculty and students.

- Appropriate student support is in place to provide extensive support to students and enhance their learning experience.
- A well-developed induction programme is provided for newly admitted students.
- A wide range of activities and resources for informal learning are provided to the students to expand their knowledge and experiences.

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

- develop and implement a definite recruitment plan for the next two years, supported by numbers and dates, to address the shortage in academic staff in the short and medium term
- introduce a supported research plan to motivate active researchers to continue their research effort and to encourage those who publish their research in high impact international journals
- develop and implement formal mechanisms for the annual appraisal of academic staff
- fully integrate e-learning resources into the curriculum to address the limitation in lecture venues and alleviate the shortage of faculty members.

3.16    **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme.**

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# 4.    Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

4.1    Graduate attributes for the BSBF programme are identified in the SER as a set of four PEOs and associated six PILOs. The achieved learning outcomes include the development of knowledge of all core functional areas of business, the application of critical thinking, problem-solving, effective oral and written communication skills, team work and leadership skills, as well as the ethical and independent management of learning tasks. The Panel finds the programme educational objectives and learning outcomes to be clearly expressed and the alignment of the CILOs to PILOs and PILOs to PEOs to be carried out well. According to the SER, the achievement of PEOs is ensured through their indirect relationship with the CILOs *via* the PILOs. The use of the range of direct (e.g. examinations and assignments) and indirect (e.g. surveys and evaluations) assessment methods outlined in the SER to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes  was confirmed during different interviews with faculty members and students. The Panel appreciates that graduate attributes are clearly stated that their achievement is assessed through direct and indirect methods.

4.2    The SER states that the Department's approach for benchmarking is to utilize the QQA's National Qualifications Framework for determining the level of courses along with the AACSB accreditation process to determine and verify the equivalence of BSBF academic standards with other similar programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally. The Panel discussed these issues with the senior management team who confirmed that the benchmarking exercise has indeed been conducted informally to ensure comparability of key features of the programme, such as overall programme structure, policies and individual course content, with those of national, regional and international AACSB-accredited institutions. These include the University of Qatar, King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Saud University. However, the Panel found no evidence of a policy on formal, periodic processes for benchmarking. Whilst the Panel acknowledges the Department's efforts in using external reference points and accreditation criteria to verify the programme's academic standards, the Panel is of the view that these processes need to be formalized. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement rigorous policies and procedures for the formal benchmarking of BSBF programme academic standards with reputable regional and international programmes.

4.3    As indicated earlier (see section 2.8), assessment regulations and procedures are detailed in the 'Regulations of Study and Examinations at the University of Bahrain' and in the college-wide 'Assessment, Grading and Moderation' policy. To ensure the

consistent implementation of the college assessment policies and regulations, an 'Examination Moderation' and 'Grade Distribution' committees, with clearly stated responsibilities, are established annually by the Department. In addition, the departmental Quality Assurance Committee conducts regular reviews of the course files, at the end of each semester, to ensure that faculty members are adhering to the assessment guidelines. From the review of course files and site visit interviews, the Panel acknowledges that generally assessment policies are consistently implemented and monitored. However, the Panel noted a number of issues that are in need of attention in order to enhance the validity and reliability of individual assessment tasks. These will be further highlighted in upcoming sections of the report. Of most concern to the Panel is the issue of formative assessment and the use of feedback to allow students to learn from their mistakes and the improvements suggested to them. The Assessment Strategy clearly stipulates that 'Formative assessment should be employed to inform the students of their progress in learning and means of improving it. In order to achieve this, formative assessment should be the basis for prompt and objective feedback to the students.' However, from site visit interviews and evidence, the Panel noted the vagueness in the understanding and implementation of formative assessment by most faculty members. The Department, in recognizing the importance of formative assessment, has included an initiative to 'organize workshops for faculty members on formative assessment techniques'. The Panel concurs and recommends that the College expedite the organization of workshops to train faculty members in the implementation of these methods to improve the quality of students' work and their learning.

4.4 The 'Assessment, Grading and Moderation Strategy' stipulates that 'Assessment items including examinations, assignments, homework, projects, etc. should assess the extent to which the students are meeting the Course Intended Learning Outcomes.' During interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that a Course Assessment Matrix is employed to align the assessment tools with the course learning outcomes. The Panel also learned that each course specification includes information on how each category of its ILOs including category A (Knowledge and understanding), B (Subject Specific Skills), C (thinking skills) and D (general transferable skills), are to be assessed *via* a range of assessment methods including examinations, quizzes, student presentations, and projects. From the review of samples of course files during the site visit, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate mechanisms in place, at a course level, to ensure the alignment of assessment methods with the course learning outcomes. However, the Panel noted from site visit interviews, that there is a need to enhance the understanding of some faculty members of the key role of 'Constructive Alignment' in the meeting of specific CILOs, and on the importance of testing the ability of students to use a range of intellectual skills to prove that they have attained a particular outcome (see recommendation in section 5.9). Whilst the Panel acknowledges that the Department

is abiding by the institutional regulations that requires objective questions (MCQs, True or False) not to exceed 50% of total examination grade (MCQs not more than 20%), the Panel is of the view that MCQs, True/False questions or quantitative methods to test skills and knowledge is not optimal for delivering a graduate capable of communicating effectively orally and in writing. The Panel thus recommends that the Department limit the use of MCQs and similar questions from second-year levels upward to enhance their oral and written communication skills.

4.5     The CoB has a well-established internal moderation system for setting assessment instruments and grading student achievement. The Assessment Strategy stipulates that moderation of assessments, examinations, and grading is conducted to ensure consistency and fairness. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel confirmed that each assessment instrument is carefully moderated from the initial design to the submission of students' results. Course coordinators are responsible for allocating the moderation tasks among the instructors who are teaching the course. Questions are submitted by each instructor and the final examination/test paper is drafted by the course coordinator. The nature of the Finance courses means there is less scope for individual faculty manipulation of the final questions. Moderation meetings are scheduled one to two weeks before the date of conducting the assessment to ensure that appropriate assessment instruments are selected and implemented. The Panel finds that the system whereby several instructors are associated with the delivery of any course, under the guidance of a Course Coordinator, implies an effective mechanism for the moderation of tests and examinations. The Panel encourages the Department to implement an equally effective system for single-section courses. Moreover, the Panel notes that currently, only the midterm and final examinations are moderated. The Panel was assured in interviews that the process of moderation of 'formative' tasks such as quizzes, presentations, is conducted on an informal basis amongst faculty colleagues who are familiar with the disciplinary course content presented. The Panel appreciates that effective internal moderation mechanisms are in place for the setting of summative assessment instruments and grading students achievements; and encourages the Department to formalize the processes for the moderation of formative assessment tasks.

4.6     There is no system in place for the external moderation of summative or formative assessment tasks, or of student responses in the form of examination scripts or individual student's work. The Panel is of the view that the Department's justification for not implementing external moderation (such as that the University of Bahrain follows an American educational system, the difficulties in finding available external moderators) are not valid. If benchmarking is viewed as valuable in aligning the programmes of the College with those of other institutions in terms of curricula (what is taught), then there is an equal value to be derived from an evaluation of how effectively individual courses are taught as a quality assurance mechanism. The

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college Assessment Strategy states that 'It is highly recommended that external examiners should be involved especially in the assessment project work and summer training'. The Panel concurs and recommends that the Department develops and implements effective processes for the external moderation of students' assessments. In this way academic standards are compared and further confidence is built within the Department on the quality of the students it graduates.

4.7     According to the SER, the appropriateness of the course assessments to the level and type of the programme is ensured through the implementation of the 'University-wide Outcome-based Assessment Process'. In addition, the 'Assessment and Moderation Strategy' mandates that 'assessment items should assess the extent to which the students are meeting the Course Intended Learning Outcomes'. During interviews, the Panel was informed that, at the end of each semester, the Department employs a 'Course Assessment Matrix' to map the students' grades in different course assessment to the CILOs. A benchmark of 70% of students achieving above 60% is implemented to determine whether the students have met the CILOs. During the site visit, the Panel confirmed that this Matrix is included in every course portfolio. The Panel also had the opportunity to scrutinize adequate samples of assessed students' work and noted that the level of student work is satisfactory and corresponds to other institutions offering similar qualifications in the region. In seeking accreditation from the AACSB, the Department will further benchmark the qualification to those of other accredited institutions. The Panel appreciates that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that the level of achievement is appropriate to the level and type of the programme.

4.8     The Panel acknowledges that the College and Department, in the selection and construction of their mapping project for intended learning outcomes, PEOs, etc. aim at the attainment of graduates worthy of the qualification. The SER states that the Department ensures that the graduates meet standards that have been set as Programme aims and intended learning outcomes. The Department employs an 'Articulation Matrix' to ensures that a student achieves PEOs and PILOs *via* CILOs. It is clear that the level of graduates' achievement meets PEOs and PILOs as demonstrated in the final results and grade distribution.  It is equally clear from employer surveys, input from the PAC and alumni, that the standard of the BSBF qualification is found acceptable in the labour market. In seeking accreditation from the AACSB the Department's intention is to further benchmark the BSBF qualification to those of other accredited institutions. The Panel appreciates that the level of programme graduates meet the programme aims and learning outcomes. The Panel is of the view that the Department should externally moderate assessments to assure that the achievements of the graduating students are consistent with the similar programmes, in Bahrain and internationally.

4.9     In line with the views of the Review Panel given above it is an inescapable fact that improvement in the teaching and assessment processes will result in increased throughput rates, improved skills and enhancement of the general quality of graduates of the programme. The College, in collaboration with the Registrar's Office monitors the drop-out rates, retention rates on a regular basis. The Panel notes an improvement in the time taken by students to graduate, from 5.09 in 2011-2012 to 4.59 in 2013-2014, with almost 60% completing within 4.5 years. The Panel also notes the high retention rate of the programme students (96% in 2013-2014). Similarly, the indicators regarding the employment of graduates, is favourable indicating the high regard in which the Department, College and its graduates are held.

4.10    The College of Business has an effective policy and system in operation for the placement of up to 500 students annually in various working environments throughout Bahrain. The current system of monitoring through a system of reports being produced by the instructor, student and workplace supervisor appears to serve its current purpose, namely to provide feedback to the College and the business concerned on the performance of the student. The Panel views the current arrangements concerning placement and monitoring of students' progress while in placement to be appropriate and satisfactory. The Panel notes with appreciation that the results of Student Training Evaluations, for the third semester 2012-2013, suggest a high level of achievement and satisfaction both on the part of students and their employment supervisors. The Panel appreciates that the work-based learning programme, in bringing theory and practice closer together, contributes to improved graduate attributes.

4.11    The SER states that a functioning Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), formed from the Department Chairperson and three external representatives of both government and private sectors, is in place. In addition, the CoB has a PAC comprised of the Departments' Chairpersons, Head of the QA Office, as well as appropriate representatives from the public and private sectors. The PACs have clear terms of reference and all meeting minutes are documented and made available to stakeholders. In its interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that the PACs are an important resource for advice on the programme's educational needs, students' research projects, as well as graduates' employability. Evidence of the PACs involvement in the review of the programme ILOs and related academic issues was presented to the Panel. The Panel heard from interviews with PACs and faculty members that ideas originating in the PACs are put before the Departmental Council and discussed. Where deemed appropriate these ideas will then be implemented. The Panel notes with appreciation that the turnout to the 'External Stakeholders' session on the part of industry representatives was indeed impressive and speaks to the value perceived to be within the BSBF programmes. From provided evidence and site visit interviews, the Panel concludes that the PACs are working well. The Panel

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is of the view that the prospect for building on this industrial interest is significant and promises to be an exciting and fruitful development for all concerned. The Panel acknowledges that the Department has established a Students Advisory Committee (SAC) with 3-4 representatives from each year, so that students' feedback on various issues related to the programme is formally incorporated into the programme improvements. The Panel appreciates that well-functioning advisory committees are in place and that their feedback is considered to inform programme improvements.

4.12  The Department, in keeping with the requirements of the College and University, conducts regular surveys for exiting graduates, alumni and employers in a bid to obtain input on satisfaction of those surveyed regarding the quality of the qualification and graduates. The results of the graduate 'Senior Exit Survey' suggest a general level of satisfaction with regard to infrastructure and academic preparation, but with marginal satisfaction at the level of curriculum and instruction. The Alumni survey results indicate that the graduates' rating of skills development has met the metric goal of 3.84 out of 5, with scores for written communication (4.33), oral communication (4.33), critical thinking and analysis (4.22), analysis and interpretation of information (4.00). However, the Panel notes that the alumni rating of the PEOs is below the metric goal, ranging from 3.33 for to 3.67 out of 5. The Department recognizes the need to improve the survey instruments to collect better focused data for improvement purposes and is included as an initiative in the programme improvement plan. The Panel encourages the implementation of this initiative. By contrast, the Employer Survey (Summer 2013-2014) results reflect a high level of satisfaction with the level of graduates standards, with an average score of 4.63 out of 5. This is supported by the good employment rate of fresh graduates and their placement in appropriate jobs. In addition, PAC members and alumni interviewed by the Panel expressed a high level of satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile. The Panel appreciates the overall satisfaction of alumni and employers with the standards of graduates, and the strong support by employers for the Department and its graduates.

4.13  In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- Graduate attributes are clearly stated and their achievement is assessed through direct and indirect methods.
- Appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure the alignment of assessment methods with the course learning outcomes.
- Effective internal moderation mechanisms are in place for the setting of summative assessment instruments and grading students achievements
- Appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure that the level of students' achievement is appropriate to the level and type of the programme.

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- The level of programme graduates meets the programme aims and learning outcomes, and is reflected in their ability to find gainful employment within the economy of Bahrain and the Gulf region.
- The work-based learning programme, in bringing theory and practice closer together, contributes to improved graduate attributes.
- Well-functioning advisory committees are in place and their feedback is considered to inform programme improvements.
- There is evidence of overall satisfaction of alumni and employers with the standards of graduates, and a strong support by employers for the Department and its graduates.

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

- develop and implement rigorous policies and procedures for the formal benchmarking of BSBF programme academic standards with reputable regional and international programmes
- expedite the organization of workshops to train faculty members in the implementation of formative assessment methods
- limit the use of MCQs and similar questions from second-year levels upward to enhance the students' oral and written communication skills
- develop and implement effective processes for the external moderation of students' assessments to build further confidence in the programme's academic standards.

4.15    **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator **Academic Standards of the Graduates.**

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# 5.   Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

*The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.*

5.1   The policies, procedures and regulations, and particularly the academic policies regarding students' admission, progression and transfer, are published on the University website and made known to the different constituencies. This is appreciated since the first step in the effective application of policies, is for them to be accessible to concerned parties: faculty, students and parents. The interviews with the students and faculty members revealed that these policies and procedures are applied effectively and consistently within the BSBF programme and across the College of Business. Many of the academic regulations and their application are discussed in the College and Department councils. Students interviewed by the Panel also confirmed that they are informed about the institution's policies and procedures during the induction day, and that their inquiries are adequately addressed. Additionally, the Internal Audit Office plays an important role in monitoring the effectiveness and consistent application of institutional procedures. The Panel appreciates the effective implementation and dissemination of the university and college policies, procedures and regulations.

5.2   Overall the hierarchy of management at the University, at the College and at the Department levels is appropriate and adequate to ensure effective management. The Department Chairperson has appropriate qualifications and experience to ensure that the programme is managed in an effective and responsible manner. The faculty members in the Department are involved in decision-making through the Departmental committees that consider almost every academic and administrative matter, from class timetables, textbooks, curriculum, recruitment and promotion, to the Examinations committee and the Programme Advisory Committee. The Panel appreciates that faculty members participate in the management of the Department, which reflects positively on the sharing of responsibilities by Faculty. In terms of academic leadership the Panel suggests that the Departmental Chairperson arrange an annual meeting with every faculty member to map out their intended individual programme for the new academic year, covering teaching to be undertaken, proposed research projects, possible publications, etc. In this way the Chairperson can lend support, encourage development strategies towards promotion or publishing goals etc. so as to facilitate not only the academic careers of individual faculty but also the academic focus of the Department.

5.3   There is a quality assurance structure at all levels of the university: a QA committee at the department level, the QA office at the college level, and a Center for Quality

Assurance exists at the university level. This structure communicates the information and monitors the implementation of the quality assurance measures set by the University. The assessment cycle is clear and can be easily followed. There is an assessment management information system to house all the data of evaluation reports and feedback. The internal audit function is also a component of the quality assurance management system and it plays an important role in quality assurance monitoring. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the last change in the programme of study in the College was initiated by the Internal Audit Department. The Panel reviewed the internal audit report that was available for the BSBF programme and found it to be very informative and useful. The Panel believes that greater importance should be attached to the findings of such reports and duly acted upon. The Panel appreciates that a clear quality assurance management system is in place and is consistently implemented and monitored. The Panel also encourages the Department to gain buy-in and support from faculty members for the adoption and implementation of the outcomes mapping process, which the Panel acknowledges is of itself a difficult task for any institution embarking upon the adoption of an OBE approach to education. In the view of the Panel, this can only be achieved through unstinting support and encouragement – at the level of QA it means less emphasis on ensuring documents are filled in (important as this might be, but for faculty to understand why this is so) and more encouragement of faculty training and assistance for faculty to recognize their critical role in the attainment of quality enhancement (see section 5.4).

5.4     The SER indicate that a number of seminars and workshops have been held to explain the quality assurance system and concepts to academic and administrative staff members. In addition, some faculty members have participated in QA seminars abroad, conducted by the AACSB. The Panel commends this practice. Meetings with the faculty and staff revealed that they have a reasonable understanding of the quality assurance system in place, and they understand their role in applying this system. This was deduced from the capacity to 'speak' the language of OBE by everyone interviewed by the Panel, such as the vocabulary of CILO's, PILO's and PEO's in explaining and answering the Panel inquiries and pointing out the importance of their alignment. However, evidence from some course files did not always concur. The Panel acknowledges that educating educators that there are indeed more effective ways of teaching and facilitating student learning than the ways they were taught, is a herculean task requiring patience and the value of good example. The Panel is pleased to note that the Department has ongoing initiatives in its Improvement Plan to 'Organize training workshops regularly for academics and support staff for better understanding of quality assurance and their role in ensuring effectiveness of ongoing provision' and 'Promote a culture of accountability to ensure that all faculty members take ownership of the curriculum development process for high level of student learning and achievement.' The review of the SERs

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and the CVs of the faculty members shows that the course offered by the QAA office was an 'Assurance of Learning' workshop attended by eight members of the Economics and Finance department in April 2013 and from which the beneficial results were immediately obvious to the Panel in the changes in their approach to assessment in the Banking & Finance programme. The Panel appreciates that the Department provides capacity-building opportunities for faculty members to enhance their understanding of quality assurance concepts. The Panel suggests that the Department encourage faculty members to attend these training workshops to establish a greater understanding of QA's importance and practices at the department and college levels. The Panel also encourages the Department to implement the principles of Change Management, from seeking college and departmental 'champions' to the regular showcasing of the examples of those who have made the transition.

5.5     An institutional policy for the development of new programmes has been approved by the University Council in October 2013. The Panel notes the comprehensive requirements and procedures to permit carefully considered and effective development of new programmes. These include formal labor market studies, study plans, benchmarking studies, assessment and teaching policies, as well as feedback from internal and external stakeholders. The Panel acknowledges that robust procedures are in place for the development of new programmes and encourages the College to monitor its implementation to ensure that the new programme is relevant, fit for purpose, and comply with existing institutional regulations.

5.6     Arrangements are in place for internal programme evaluation, the QAC Director's 'Quality Manual for DAC Committees' outlines the preparation of an internal SER for each Department (QF-23-rev.a.1) and the preparation of the QAAC Self Evaluation Improvement Plan (QF-25-rev.a.2). A departmental quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report along with an improvement plan is submitted to the university quality assurance center. This practice is commended. The SER generally refers to the refinement of the process initiated in the 2012-2013 academic year under the supervision of the College's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee which set out to refine the PILOs of the College's various programmes, along with the development of an Assessment of Learning (AoL) plan in compliance with the accreditation requirements of the AACSB. In essence this has seen the refinement of the 'mapping system' of CILOs to PILOs and PEOs as currently exists. The value of the process is clearly visible in the generally tight integration of this process already commented upon elsewhere in this report. The Panel appreciates that quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report, together with an improvement plan, is submitted to the University Quality Assurance Center.

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5.7    The College has a policy of reviewing the programmes every 5 years. The review system is illustrated in the SER. Adopting this policy in 2013 resulted in a revised programme. The new programme has been a culmination of various inputs. One was a demand from students, as concluded from the students' meeting and referred to in the SAC meeting minutes;  another was the influence of the AACSB as the proposed accreditation body for the College's programmes; while a third was undoubtedly the input of the Departmental Review Committee. The procedure followed ensures that changes in the programme are drawn from a wide range of international benchmarked programmes and local inputs. The Panel commends this practice. To ensure the relevance of the programme to the purpose, the suggested changes and modifications were revealed to the Programme Advisory committee (PAC) at its meeting on June 5, 2013. In the interview with employers and external stakeholders, the Panel noted that they mostly appreciate this change. To ensure that the new programme complies with existing regulations, it was reviewed at several management levels up to the University Council. The Panel appreciates that a robust system is implemented for the periodic review of programmes to ensure their relevance and stability.

5.8    The SER distinguishes between internal and external feedback on the basis that 'internal' relates to the stakeholders involved in the immediacy of the departmental functions, such as the PAC, Alumni and Student Council surveys, while 'external' is interpreted to the wider benchmarking activities of the AACSB. There is value in the distinction made along these lines. In preparing for the Fall 2015 visit of the accreditation committee of the AACSB, and the advice of its mentor, it is clear that the influence of this body is recognized as important and regularly acted upon. At the same time, the senior management informed the Panel that the CoB has no intention of sacrificing its autonomy and individuality in pursuit of AACSB accreditation, which the Panel found reassuring. The involvement and recommendations provided by the AACSB through an improvement plan (a copy was given to Panel) indicate a similar line of thought to the Panel. The Panel draws assurance in the similar identification of changes needed. The Panel appreciates the Department's on-going AACSB processes and the beneficial impact this has had on the programme review outcomes. What was less evident to the Panel was the extent to which the internal stakeholder feedback is acted upon. Although less 'high-profile' this feedback is likely to have a greater bearing of the day-to-day operations of departments within the College and hence on the immediate quality of its functions. The Panel was not able to determine just how the data gathered from all these internal sources (such as students course evaluations) is discussed and, where considered important, acted upon. The Panel recommends that the Department regularly involve the feedback from all key stakeholders, including information from the internal stakeholders, in the review and updating of programme content and development.

5.9     The Department conducts a number of surveys to collect stakeholders' feedback; these comprise: an 'Employer Survey', a 'Senior Exit Survey' and an 'Alumni Survey'. There is evidence in the SER that the results of these surveys are analyzed. However, the descriptive statistical analysis for student course evaluations was not made available to the Panel. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that major decisions concerning the changes in the programme have been taken in light of the surveys' analysis results. For example, the introduction of the Major and Minor fields of study, and the revision of the contents of several courses, which the Panel appreciates. The results of the graduate 'Senior Exit Survey' suggest a general level of satisfaction with regard to infrastructure and academic preparation, but with only marginal satisfaction at the level of curriculum and instruction. The Alumni survey highlights the issue of skills development as indicated by the sub-par results at 3.3 in terms of both Table 3.13.2 and 3.13.3. The Panel is encouraged that the Department has addressed the issues arising from these surveys in its programme improvement plan. During interviews, the Panel was informed that there are already steps being taken to revise the content of several of the surveys. This is evidenced in the programmes improvement plan initiative for the 'Revision of Employer and alumni Surveys to collect better focused data for improvement purposes'. The Panel acknowledges the Department's recognition of the need for continuous improvement in the programme and encourages the Department to ensure the effective communication of the analysis of findings to external stockholders.

5.10    The SER states that 'CoB believes that academic members are one of the main keys to the attainment of this commitment and this could be achieved through ongoing professional development process.' The Panel acknowledges that the CoB provides encouragement for the personal development of faculty members in the pursuit of their academic careers. This was confirmed by faculty members during site visit interviews. However, there was no evidence that these activities are linked to formal training needs analysis or staff appraisal. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement a strategy for staff development, linked to staff appraisal, to evaluate and enhance the professional capabilities of faculty members. The lists of conference and workshop attendance by individual staff are impressive. The review of the SER and the CVs of the faculty members shows that inevitably the greatest number of entries captured in the 'Faculty Professional Development and Activity' table refer to faculty members attending discipline specific conferences and workshops. The Panel acknowledges this as a healthy trend but, in keeping with recommendations made elsewhere in the report (see section 5.4), wish to stress the need for faculty members to also become sufficiently familiar with teaching and assessment methods as well as soft skills. The Panel notes that the Department has an ongoing initiative to 'Enhance faculty professional development programmes that

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can help improve quality of teaching and student retention'. The Panel concurs and urges the Department to expedite the implementation of this initiative.

5.11   The Department strongly relies on the PACs meetings to ensure that the BSBF programme is aligned with the labour market needs and trends as well as the educational performance and professional needs of industry. The Panel learned from interviews that the PACs are also seen as industry contacts or conduits through which the Department can access collaborative agreements in areas such as research projects for faculty and senior student projects. The practical training (internship) is also an intervention to provide an insight of the real world to the graduating students. These are all healthy developments acknowledged by the Panel which suggests that as the system becomes more entrenched in the culture of the Department, might be further expanded to embrace a wider range of participants from the appropriate industries in a bid to further widen the benefits for both the Department and industry.

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

- The university and college policies, procedures and regulations are effectively disseminated and consistently implemented.
- Faculty members participate in the management of the Department, which reflects positively on the sharing of leadership responsibilities.
- Comprehensive quality assurance processes, with clear responsibilities for quality assurance, are in place at the department, college as well as the university level.
- The Department provides capacity-building opportunities for academic and administrative staff to enhance their understanding of quality assurance concepts.
- A robust system is implemented for the periodic review of programmes to ensure their relevance and stability.
- Quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report, together with an improvement plan, is submitted to the University Quality Assurance Center.
- The involvement of, and the recommendations provided by the AACSB contribute to the programme improvement plans.

5.13   In terms of improvements the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- develop and implement a strategy for staff development, linked to staff appraisal, to evaluate and enhance the professional capabilities of faculty members

- expedite the implementation of faculty professional development programmes that are specifically targeted for the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning
- regularly involve the feedback from all key stakeholders, including information from the internal stakeholders, in the review and updating of programme content and development.

### 5.14  Judgment

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.**

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# 6. Conclusion

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

**There is confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance of the College of Business Administration offered by the University of Bahrain.**

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