Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature

College of Arts

University of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of the Review: 3 - 7 December 2017

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Table of Contents

Acronyms

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry
HoD	Head of the Department
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
ITC	Information Technology Center
MIS	Management Information Systems
PEOs	Programme Educational Objectives
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UILOs	University Intended Learning Outcomes
UoB	University of Bahrain

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Arts at the University of Bahrain (UoB) was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain.

UoB was notified by the DHR/BQA on 6 March 2017 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of a set of programmes offered by College of Arts with the site visit taking place on 3-7 December 2017. These programmes are: Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature, Master in Arabic Language and Literature, Bachelor in Islamic Studies, Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, and Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies. In preparation for the review, UoB conducted a self-evaluation of the above-mentioned programmes and submitted the self-evaluation reports with appendices on the agreed date on 2 July 2017.

The DHR constituted three panels consisting of experts in the academic fields relevant to the programmes above and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. A total of seven reviewers participated in the reviews of the programmes.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *4*

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature based on:

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

It is expected that the UoB will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature. 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 and administrative staff of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature.

C. Overview of the College of Arts

The College of Arts, at the UoB, was originally established as a part of the University College of Science, Art and Education, which was founded in 1978. In 1986, the UoB was established by a merger of the Gulf Polytechnic and the University College of Science, Arts and Education. The Board of Trustees of the UoB issued a decision, in 1990, to separate the College of Arts & Science into two colleges: the College of Arts and the College of Science. The current vision of the College of Arts is 'to occupy its leading role in promoting the identity and the modern vision of heritage; be distinct in creating the cultural environment and stimulating scientific creativity and intellectual excellence in an atmosphere open to values of pluralism and cultural diversity through outputs that integrate graduates in development, community service and the labour market.' The College of Arts currently includes five departments, which offer undergraduate programmes of study leading to Bachelor of Arts qualifications as well as Master of Arts degrees. At the time of the site visit, the College employed 128 full-time and 69 part-time faculty members, and 29 administrative staff. The total number of enrolled students was 5719.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017 5

D. Overview of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature

The Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies was established in 1979, under the auspices of the University College of Science, Arts and Education. The Department is offering now three programmes, which are: the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature, the Bachelor in Islamic Studies, and the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature. The first cohort of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature was admitted in the academic year 1993-1994. The programme has been subject to a number of revisions and changes, and the most recent one was in the academic year 2008-2009. The number of enrolled students in the programme at the time of the site visit was (28), and there were seven full-time faculty members teaching the courses of the programme. They contribute directly to the delivery of the programme, and are supported by the Head of the Department (HoD) and three administrative staff. The total number of the programme's graduates from its commencement and to the date of this visit is (59).

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature

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**

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017
6

1.   Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

1.1   The Master programme in Arabic Language and Literature has a clear academic plan that highlights its objectives. It includes qualifying students in the scientific, literary, teaching and research areas; enriching their knowledge in Arabic language, literature, culture and civilization; deepening their sense of belonging to Arabism and Islam; installing the love of the country; and directing them to interact with modern cultures. During interviews with the academic staff, the Panel learned that these educational objectives of the programme (PEOs) have been mapped to the components of the College mission, as well as, the strategic plan objectives of the UoB. From the specifications of the programme and the provided evidence, the Panel finds that its PEOs are interrelated, clear, and contributing to the achievement of the mission of the College and the University. The Panel also noted through meetings with the senior management of the programme, faculty members and students that they are aware of the programme's intended objectives and aims. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme has a clear academic plan that signifies its objectives to prepare specialists in Arabic language and literature, in alignment with the mission of the College of Arts and the University.

1.2   The current curriculum of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme consists of (36) credit hours that are distributed as follows: (24) credit hours allocated to (8) core courses, with (3) credit hours per course, in addition to one elective course (3 credit hours) chosen by the student from a list of (3) elective courses, alongside (9) credit hours for the Master's thesis. By studying the specification of the programme, its study plan, and the provided evidence during the site visit, the Panel found that the programme contains the required courses for the Master's degree in Arabic language and literature, and covers the different fields that serve the specializations of Arabic language, in addition to covering the longstanding aspects on one hand and the contemporary ones on the other. The programme also contains the course 'Research Paper' (Arabic 560), through which the student learns about the various approaches of the scientific research, and how to employ them in preparing reports, summaries, and various researches in the fields of specialization. The course also focuses on library resources and how they relate to students' learning, showing the students how to deal with scientific resources and references; as well as training them on how to interpret the findings of scientific research in light of the objectively adopted criteria. The Research Paper course is the last course the student registers for before registering for the Master Thesis, to prepare him/her properly to conduct the scientific research. Therefore, the Panel concludes that the programme provides a balance between theory and practice. However, the Panel advises introducing the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *7*

course of Achieving Manuscripts; as it is important in providing students with diverse knowledge and skills in theoretical and practical research, as well as, in linking the student to the heritage in all fields of the Arabic language. Moreover, the courses are distributed over the study plan in an appropriate sequence, providing a natural progression from the less deep courses to the deeper ones, and finally to the courses which employ higher skills of thinking, critique, analysis, and practice (linguistic issues, rhetoric and ancient criticism issues and grammatical issues). This is in addition to applying skills through courses such as the Scientific Research Project, Music of Poetry, Reading Theory, and the Master Thesis. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum of the programme and its study plan cover the knowledge and skills required for the specialization and its scientific degree in a manner that provides a balance between theory and practice and ensures a suitable sequence for the student. Additionally, the distribution of courses over the semesters ensures an appropriate academic workload for students, which was confirmed by the interviewed students during the site visit. However, they noted that they needed more time for completing the study plan to focus and reflect more on topics related to the Master Thesis, and to acquire the research skills through engaging in the application of research. During the meeting with the instructors who supervise the dissertations, they confirmed the need to increase the number of hours dedicated to the thesis to be (12) hours instead of (9) hours, based on the results of the benchmarking conducted by the programme with similar programmes. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should evaluate the consistency of the credit hours dedicated to the Master Thesis and adjusting them to be suitable for the level and amount of work required for the thesis.

1.3 The specification of the programme's courses is documented using a standard form issued by the University Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center (QAAC). The specification of the course includes: the course content and its distribution over the semester, its objectives, its Intended learning Outcomes (ILOs), a matrix mapping the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), its teaching methods and approaches to assess the course outcomes, and its scientific references. By reviewing the Self-evaluation Report (SER) and specification of the courses, the Panel found that the specification of the courses is well designed and their contents are aligned with the Master's level, as well as, the mission and objectives of the programme and its aims. During interviews with the academic staff, the Panel learned that the courses were evaluated by an academic member, who provides his observations in the form of a report, and if there was a need to change the course, the textbooks, or resources, the matter is raised to the Department Council and then to the College Council, as needed. The SER indicates that the Curriculum Committee of the Department reviews the course files at the end of each semester to take advantage of observations received, and then prepares reports and recommendations for improving and updating the programme content. Through interviews, the SER and the provided evidence, the Panel learned that the Department

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017
8

has conducted informal benchmarking practices for the programme with other similar programmes, and their results were utilized to ensure that the course syllabi were appropriate for the programme. The Panel appreciates that the syllabi of the programme's courses are documented in a clear and organized manner, the utilized textbooks and learning resources are diverse and appropriate for teaching the courses, and that the courses' content is appropriate, in terms of breadth and depth, to the programme needs.

1.4   The Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme has (10) PILOs stated in its specification and courses, through which the skills expected to be mastered by the students are identified such as: knowledge skills, communication skills, information technology skills, critical thinking, self-learning, and lifelong learning skills related to the discipline, as well as thinking skills and general skills, which are suitable for the objectives and the scientific degree of the programme. Through the meetings conducted during the site visit, faculty members explained the mechanisms by which the PILOs were linked to its objectives and the Intended Learning Outcomes at the university level (UILOs), and how the university's QAAC supports this process. The Panel reviewed the lists of mapping the learning outcomes, and noted that the mapping process has been properly implemented, and that the PILOs are well written and measurable. The Panel appreciates that there are intended learning outcomes for the programme, which are stated in its specification, and that they are well written, measurable, and adequately mapped to the objectives and aims of the programme.

1.5   The SER indicates that there are clear CILOs that are mapped to the PILOs. The Panel also learned from interviews conducted during the site visit that the programme relied on the university manual for writing the ILOs of each course. After reviewing various courses, the Panel found that the CILOs were generally written in a manner which is appropriate to the level and content of the course. Through the provided evidence, it was clear that the CILOs were linked to the PILOs to ensure that the PILOs are achieved when the student has passed the requirements of the study. The Panel appreciates that there are CILOs that are appropriate to the level and content of each programme and linked to its ILOs as well.

1.6   The programme adopts a teaching and learning policy, that is consistent with the UoB's standard document for the System of Study and Examinations, which is published on its website and disseminated to all its colleges. This document outlines the basic principles, which the faculty members should take into account during the teaching and learning processes, such as: encouraging students' self-learning, using multiple teaching methods and various means to create interactive learning among students, and benefiting from blended learning methods (classroom study and e-learning), in addition to utilizing scientific research's findings and updates in the teaching and learning processes, both inside and outside the classrooms, to achieve

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *9*

the PEOs and PILOs. Furthermore, the specification of the courses refers to the teaching and learning mechanisms used in each course, and how they contribute to achieving the CILOs. In addition to that, the interviewed students met by the Panel during the site visit emphasized the variety of teaching and learning mechanisms used in the delivery of the programme and its courses, including: theoretical lectures, discussions and opinions exchange, site visits, group work, preparing research and work papers, classroom debates, and directing students to use the library. The provided evidence indicates the participation of faculty members in three workshops, conducted by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in the Department, on the use of various teaching methods to achieve the objectives of the course and its ILOs. Thus, the Panel appreciates that different teaching and learning methods, which are appropriate to the practical nature of the programme, are used in the programme and that they contribute to the achievement of its ILOs. Moreover, students are encouraged to participate in the learning process, and develop independent learning skills. Although, the e-learning is described in the University of Bahrain's teaching and learning strategy and there is an e-learning platform, the Panel found, through an inspection tour at Zain E-Learning Center and interviews organized with the faculty and students, that there is a limited use of e-learning in the programme. The e-learning platform is often used as a means to store the learning materials, while other features of the platform are not used effectively or in a manner that can contribute to achieving the outcomes of the programme whether those related to its discipline or its general outcomes. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should implement procedures that contribute to using the e-learning appropriately in line with the teaching and learning policy of the University, and to measure its effectiveness in achieving the PILOs.

1.7   The UoB has a clear and published assessment policy, which includes formative and summative assessments to verify the achievement of the learning outcomes, as the assessment tools and the learning outcomes -intended to be measured- are clearly defined in the course specification. Additionally, students are informed about the assessment policy of the programme through the student's handbook and through the course specification, that distributed to them at the beginning of the semester, which includes the assessment tools to be utilized and their assigned proportions from the final grade of the course. The interviewed students confirmed, during the site visit, that the faculty members adhere to what is incorporated in the specification of the courses. They also expressed their satisfaction with the fairness of the assessment as they indicated that they are informed about their work and the assessed examination papers, and they can review their grades with the course instructor during the semester. Moreover, the student has the right to present an appeal *via* the Department of Admissions and Registration, in case of his/her objection about a certain grade. In such case, the HoD forms a special committee -not including the course instructor- to re-evaluate the student's paper, and if it was found that he/she deserves more than the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *10*

grade granted to him/her, the grade and results will be adjusted. During interviews, some students indicated that their grades had been modified, due to them submitting a formal appeal. The assessment policy also requires providing feedback to the student to benefit from it in developing his/her academic level. Through the course files provided during the site visit and from interviews with faculty, students and programme staff, the Panel found that the programme followed clear and appropriate mechanisms to provide feedback to the students. The Panel was also ensured that students and faculty members are aware of procedures and policies related to the evaluation process, which are available on the university's website and in the student's handbook. Moreover, faculty members are informed about any changes in the university's assessment policy, through department meetings and the directives of the university administration in this regard. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies to assess the students' achievements, which are suitable for the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, and that the faculty members and the students are aware of them. However, the Panel noted the lack of evidence on complying with the implementation of the University's policy related to verifying academic plagiarism in all students' work. Thus, the Panel urges the College to ensure the implementation of the university's policies and procedures related to verifying academic plagiarism in the programme properly (see paragraph: 3.3). By examining the specifications of the courses and from interviews with the faculty members, the Panel found that the assessment tools specified in the course specification are varied and appropriate to measure the achievement of the CILOs; however, the methods of formative assessment are not comprehensive within the assessment mechanisms of the Master of Arabic and Literature programme. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should consider ways to enhance the formative assessment for the Master's students due to its benefit in providing them with feedback.

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

- There is a clear academic plan that clarifies the objectives of the programme to prepare specialists in the Arabic language and literature, in alignment with the missions of the College of Arts and the University.
- The curriculum of the programme and its study plan cover the knowledge and skills required for the discipline and its scientific degree in a manner that provides a balance between theory and practice and ensures a suitable sequence for the student.
- The course syllabi of the programme are documented in a clear and organized manner, the utilized textbooks and learning resources are wide-ranging and appropriate for teaching the courses, and the content of the courses is appropriate to the programme's needs in terms of breadth and depth.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   11

- The intended learning outcomes of the programme, which are stated in its specification, are well written, measurable, and adequately mapped to the objectives and aims of the programme.
- There are different teaching and learning methods in the programme, which are appropriate to the practical nature of the programme and contribute to achieving its intended learning outcomes, in addition to encouraging students to participate in the learning process, and develop independent learning skills.
- There are clear policies to assess the students' achievements, which are suitable for the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, and of which the faculty members and the students are aware.

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

- evaluate the consistency of the credit hours dedicated to the Master Thesis and adjust them to be suitable for the level and the amount of work required for the thesis
- implement procedures that contribute to using the e-learning properly and in line with the teaching and learning policy of the University, and measure its effectiveness in achieving the intended learning outcomes of the programme
- consider new ways to enhance the formative assessment for the Master's students, due to its benefit in providing them with feedback.

1.10   **Judgement**

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

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *12*

2. 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.

2.1 The College has a clear policy of accepting students for the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, which is published on its website and follows the university admission regulations. This policy is stipulated clearly in the postgraduate studies regulations, and based on it, the applicant must have a bachelor degree in Arabic Language and/or Arabic Literature with a minimum score of (2.67) out of (4). In addition, the applicant must pass the English language and the entrance examinations and a personal interview, to ensure the success and continuity of students admitted to the programme. These requirements are clearly declared *via* the university's website and through the published booklets of the University and the College. In addition, dates of applying for admission to the programme are announced, within an appropriate period *via* the social media, the site of the Deanship of Admission and Registration, and in the local newspapers. The Panel appreciates that the admission policy, in general, is appropriate and consistent with what is common in such programmes offered in other universities, and that it is published and well-known by all stakeholders. Those in charge of the programme and the admission confirmed that the admission policy is being reviewed constantly based on the observations of different parties; however, the Panel was not provided with clear evidence on carrying out a periodic formal review of the admission policy of the programme based on clear justifications. Hence, the Panel advises the College, in cooperation with the University, to adopt a clear policy specifying the bases and inputs through which, the programme's admission policy will be reviewed.

2.2 The profiles of students who are admitted to the programme indicate that the University and the College adhere to the requirements stated in the Admission Policy of the University and the programme. The Panel has met with some of the students of the Master programme, it was confirmed that their attributes are aligned with the requirements of the programme, and that they have passed the personal interview determined by the College. The Panel was also ensured that the admission system of the programme is consistent with the sample of the admitted students, and that the admission requirements match the objectives of the programme and help in achieving them. The Panel noted that those who teach the programme's courses are keen to raise the level of the graduates through introducing a package of remedial courses, including: the Basics of Traditional and Generative Grammar, Rhetoric and Critique, and Modern Literary Critique. This is due to the importance of studying these courses with their introductions and terminologies before tackling the major issues included in the programme. The Panel appreciates that the attributes of the admitted students

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts – Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature – 3 - 7 December 2017   *13*

to the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme are appropriate and consistent with its objectives and aims.

2.3   According to the SER, there is an appropriate organizational structure to manage the programme, as the responsibility of the daily running of the programme is assigned to its coordinator, who follows the Head of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department in the administrative hierarchy, who in turn follows the Dean of the College of Arts. There is also an appropriate administrative and academic structure, as well as, a Deanship for the Postgraduate Studies at the university level, which is responsible for the supervision of the organization and coordination of the postgraduate studies at the university and the college levels. At the department level, there are several committees such as, the Graduate Studies Committee, the QAC, the Scientific Research Committee, the Programmes Development Committee, the Employment and Contracts Renewal Committee, the Cultural Committee, the Academic Promotions Committee, the Examinations Committee and the Textbooks Committee. These committees are responsible for the various tasks of running the academic affairs of the programme and submitting their recommendations to the Department Council, and then to the College Council, as needed. The programme coordinator has a constant communication with the HoD, advisory committees, sub-committees and others, to facilitate the implementation of the administrative system followed by the academic programmes at the University. There is a clear description of responsibilities and duties, and the Panel was confirmed, during interviews conducted at the site visit, that the staff and students were aware of them. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a clear and appropriate organizational structure for the programme management, with which the staff and students are familiar.

2.4   The SER confirms that the main responsibility of teaching the programme's courses and supervising the Master research is carried out by the faculty members of the Department, in light of the regulations developed by the Department Council. There are (7) faculty members holding Ph.D. degrees: (4) professors, (2) assistant professors and (1) associate professor, who contribute to the programme delivery. Through their CVs, it was found that their experiences are compatible with the needs of the programme. The number of students enrolled in the programme at the time of the site visit was (28) students, which indicates that the students to faculty ratio is very convenient. However, department's faculty members are also responsible for teaching courses in other programmes offered by the Department, in addition to teaching Arabic language courses taught to students enrolled in various programmes at the UoB, which leads to a constant increase in their teaching workload. During interviews, the Panel learned that the Department had a plan to recruit faculty members, including professors and associate professors, either through contracting which is the regular system or through the system of visiting professors who have experience and excellence, in order to encourage scientific research. However, no formal evidence was

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *14*

provided to the Panel. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should expedite the development and implementation of a formal plan, to recruit new faculty members who are experts, and to reduce the actual teaching workload of existing faculty members. Nevertheless, faculty members interviewed during the site visit emphasized that the policy of the College encourage scientific research, participation in seminars and conferences, publishing in peer-reviewed journals internally and externally, attending community conferences, scientific writing in special publications according to the scientific research strategy, and applying for research grants related to their projects. Moreover, the Panel noted the relevance between the research work and the publications of the teaching staff on one hand and the programme and its topics on the other hand; where the provided evidence indicates that students benefit from the research output of the faculty members as a scientific reference for their research. In addition to that, some research had a social influence on the works of writers, poets, and thinkers, which proves the relationship between the scientific research and the Bahraini society, as well as, the cultural community. The Panel appreciates that the programme is presented by faculty members, who are sufficient for its needs, and that their research output is appropriate and contributes to the programme delivery.

2.5   The UoB has approved procedures for recruitment, appraisal, and promotion which are published, transparently applied in the programme, and known by the faculty members. The recruitment processes follow specific procedures beginning with advertising job vacancies on the university's website, then studying applications forwarded by the Department to the College, and then to the University, after that, candidates are compared, and the selected faculty member is appointed according to vacant posts. Faculty members, interviewed by the Panel during the site visit, confirmed that recruitment procedures were carried out in a consistent transparent manner. The regulation of faculty members explains their rights and duties, as well as, methods of appraisal and promotion. There is also a system to evaluate the quality of the faculty members performance, which is filled up electronically and regularly by students. The HoD evaluates academic staff members based on several aspects: the academic activity, the teaching performance, faculty members relationships with their colleagues, their cooperation with the HoD, their research and scientific activity, and the services provided by them to the University and the Community. The Panel appreciates that there are clear transparent procedures relating to the recruitment process, and the performance evaluation of faculty members. Moreover, through the provided evidence and interviews with faculty members, the Panel observed -in general- that there is an appropriate retention rate among faculty members, and that faculty members mostly end their work at the University because of their desire to go on retirement, or the expiration of their contract. The University also adopts a system for the academic promotions of its academic members, which includes standards for formulating committees of academic promotion at the department, college, and university levels, as well as mechanisms for the operation of these committees, in

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *15*

addition to requirements and standards for academic promotions. During the interviews conducted with faculty members, the Panel found that in the last three years no academic member applied for promotion, which is due to increased workloads assigned to faculty members. As a result, the College has contracted with new academic members, at the academic ranks of professor and associate professor in the academic year 2015-2016. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement an appropriate plan to assist its faculty members to be promoted academically. As for the introduction of the new academics to the University, its system, services, and resources, the Panel was informed, during interviews with faculty members, that this activity is implemented on the department and the college levels but in an informal manner. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a formal induction programme for new academics on the department, college, and university levels to introduce them to the university policies, regulations, resources, and various services, and evaluate the effectiveness of the induction programme.

2.6   The UoB has a number of up to date systems of information, which are in place, such as: online registration system, academic advising, timetables, and human resources. These systems are compatible with the programme aims and type. During the site visit and from the provided evidence, it became clear to the Panel that the academic and administrative staff have online access to information regarding salary slips, attendance reports, registers of students enrolled in the programme, overtime hours of administrative staff, and other needs of administrative and academic staff. These online services are also available for the students to register their courses, pay tuition, obtain their timetables, and name of the academic advisor assigned for each student. In addition to that, interviews with faculty members revealed the availability of recording absence and monitoring students' grades online. The E-learning Centre also provides reports about the utilization of its services by the academic departments. The library also provides reports about available resources and its utilization by the College. Despite the availability of an Information Management System (MIS), that is aligned with the programme objectives and type, and used in the management of the programme, students, and various resources, the Panel found no evidence of using the MIS holistically and strategically to enhance the decision- making process. Thus, the Panel appreciates that there is an MIS that is suitable for the programme objective and needs. The Panel advises the College to further utilize the MIS in order to improve the decision-making process at the strategic level of the programme.

2.7   The Information Technology Center (ITC) in UoB has formal policies and procedures that are in place, to ensure security and safety of all records and information of the students in the University, in addition to policies and procedures of risk management. There is an information server at the university campus, as well as another one outside the University, with replicas of data and information stored on the main server, to

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts‒ Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature‒ 3 - 7 December 2017   *16*

ensure that it is not damaged for any reason. Moreover, to ensure confidentiality and safety of data, access to students' data is only allowed to authorized people according to specific procedures. There is also a system of graded authorization to allow each faculty member to receive his students' data. In regard to the process of grades entry, it is assigned to the course instructor only, and approved by the HoD. It also can be modified formally - if required - and after the approval of the HoD and the Dean. Moreover, faculty members confirmed that the Department keeps records of the examination papers, student grades, and answer papers in specific places for at least a year. The Panel appreciates policies and procedures that are applied in the programme to ensure the integrity of information related to the students of the programme, and maintain its security and accuracy.

2.8   During the site visit, the Panel had a tour in the University and the College, through which the Panel learned that the College of Arts buildings include an adequate number of classrooms, each of them accommodating (40-50) students and are equipped with computers and projectors that are necessary to present the scientific materials, in addition to a number of multi-purpose halls accommodating more than (100) students. Moreover, the University provides places for the students inside the campus such as sports halls, besides many other places available for students to practice their activities (e.g. the club of arts and music, theater, chess, media, cinema, gym, wellness center, and offices for the students' council). Alongside the available (Wi-Fi) service at the laboratories, the College of Arts, and at the campus in general, moreover, the university provides email services to students and faculty members. The University also provides sufficient number of individual offices for the academic staff, equipped with computers, and adequate for work and meeting students, and there are offices for part-time faculty members. Moreover, there are online systems (Blackboard & Moodle) provided by Zain E-learning Center and enabling instructors to present some parts of their courses online, despite the fact that the use of these systems is limited in the programme. In addition, there are general laboratories including an adequate number of computers for students' use. However, the Panel considers that it is important to provide an audio laboratory, to be used by the students of the programme in learning phonetics, or in the course 'Research Paper', where they are required to identify the nature of the vocal performance of the Arabic word's letters. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a specific laboratory for audios to meet the needs of the programme and its courses. During the tour at the library, it was revealed the availability of textbooks, references, and adequate electronic resources that serve the students and faculty members, as well as online databases, which are adequate and up to date. However, the Panel observed that the Master dissertations in specializations of Arabic Language and Literature are not sufficient, in spite of their availability at the library. Thus, the Panel advises the library to increase its holdings of Ph.D. and Master dissertations to facilitate the students' learning process and meet their research needs. Furthermore, there are study

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language
and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   17

rooms, support services, and group study rooms in the library; there is also a special well-equipped room for the visually impaired. During interviews, the students and staff expressed their satisfaction with the available facilities and services that support the programme, as indicated by the provided statistics referring to the higher number of students who have benefited from the library services. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs, in addition to providing resources and references, whether in hard copies or soft copies, to meet the needs of both students and faculty members.

2.9 The University of Bahrain has a tracking system to track the use of different resources, the Panel observed during the site visit that the timetables for the use of classrooms and laboratories are generated by the deanship of admission and registration and posted at the door, and any request to change these tables is carried out by the deanship. Moreover, Zain E-learning Center provides a platform for the e-learning courses incorporated within the e-learning system, where the system collects data about the use of its resources and generates various reports on the size and forms of use. Moreover, the library has a rigorous system to monitor and track its operations. In addition, computer laboratories at the college level provide registers to track their use in the educational and research process. The Panel also learned, during interviews that it is possible to generate reports considered important by the Department and the College in regard to the students, and their academic affairs, as well as, reports about the programme usage of the provided services. The presented evidence and interviews conducted during the site visit indicate the actual use of these services, but with inconsistent ratios, as the e-learning platform is used by the programme in a very limited manner, while there is an adequate use by students and faculty members for the services available in the library. The Panel acknowledges that there are tracking systems to evaluate the utilization of different resources, but no evidence was provided on using reports of these systems by the programme managers to inform the decision-making process regularly and periodically. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should further utilize the tracking reports and the updated data of the tracking systems to enhance making decisions that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the educational process.

2.10 The UoB has several administrative bodies of supportive nature serving the academic process, and they all work to provide students with support, and facilitate their learning process. During the site visit and from the provided evidence, the Panel was informed that there is appropriate support available for the students including laboratories, library, and e-learning, whether through the infrastructure, the available computer applications and the interpersonal support such as that provided by laboratory technicians and specialists in the library. As for academic advising, there is a system to assist students in choosing appropriate subjects for them. There is also a handbook for the students with special-needs, who are provided with several supports

such as: helping them in course registration, providing them with equipped car, as well as support services provided by volunteer students. The library also provides its services for these students through allocating a special room for the visually impaired that contains a computer specially equipped for them. The Career Guidance Office of the Vice President for Community and Graduate Services prepares the students for the challenges of the labour market by providing them with several services such as: the Career Day, CV pickup and delivery service, nomination and employment service at the university campus. Moreover, the Department of Advice and Guidance of the Deanship of Student Affairs provides guidance and advice to students through specialized social workers. In addition to that, the university provides the students with a comprehensive health support through the Department of Healthcare, as well as, the Department of Safety and Security in order to maintain their safety and security. It was revealed during interviews with students, that students are satisfied with different support services provided to them. The Panel reviewed students' exit-surveys, which are used to measure their satisfaction, and it was noted the insufficient evidence referring to the use of these surveys in improving the quality of the support services provided to students. The Panel urges the University to expand the measurement of satisfaction about these services so as to include students from all different years of study, and to implement these surveys periodically and regularly, and to utilize their results in improving the available support to the programme (see paragraph: 4.8).

2.11   The University implements an induction programme for the newly enrolled students, which is organized by the Deanship of Students Affairs. During the Induction Day, students are prepared to be integrated in the university life. They are also provided with the required information about the University, as well as, with a handbook about the rights and duties of the UoB's students and a guidebook for the new students in the College of Arts. The Deanship of Graduate Studies participate in the Induction Day by providing students with a special booklet that contains information about the regulations, how to register for courses, procedures related to the Master thesis and other relevant information. During interviews, faculty members indicated that introductory information about the programme is available on the website for any student who could not attend the induction programme, and interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the Induction Day and its effectiveness. However, the Panel was not provided with any evidence indicating that those in charge with the induction programme had measured the extent to which students are satisfied with the programme. The Panel appreciates the arrangements taken by the University management to introduce the newly admitted student to the programme and the provided services and activities. The Panel advises the College to track systematically the new students' satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Induction Day and to utilize the results in improving the induction programme for the new students.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *19*

2.12   The UoB has an academic advising system, which is detailed in the handbook of the academic staff members, stating that the HoD should appoint an academic advisor for each student enrolled in the programme, and inform the Deanship of Admission and Registration to add the name of the academic advisor to the student's electronic page. The academic advisor works according to a stated policy, as he/she submits an annual report to the HoD about the core problems, which will be presented to the Department Council and the University Council, upon request. As per chapter (9) of the Study Regulations for Postgraduate Students, the student receives an academic warning if he/she did not get a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of (3.0) out of (4.0). The student will also be dismissed from the University, if he/she did not reach the minimum required CGPA in the two semesters subsequent to receiving the academic warning. The academic advising system is supposed to monitor the at-risk students who received an academic warning, as he/ she meets the academic advisor to help and give him/her the appropriate advices to raise his/her CGPA. However, no evidence was presented to the Panel indicating to the effectiveness of these mechanisms in addressing cases of academic failure. Accordingly, the Panel acknowledges that there are mechanisms for academic advising, and advises the College to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and their contribution to improving the academic performance of the student.

2.13   The UoB provides various opportunities to expand the knowledge and experience of the students, through supporting activities, including: participation in the student activities in cooperation with the college associations and clubs, and student exhibitions. During the site visit interviews, it became clear to the Panel that students are allowed to participate in a wide range of informal learning activities organized by different entities at the University, these activities include cultural and social activities, sports events, seminars, various workshops, the Career Day, and peer-teaching programme. In addition to that, students are given the opportunity to expand their organizational and professional knowledge through accomplishing the Master theses and selecting topics relevant to the Bahraini community, and for which external experts are invited to discuss their Master dissertations. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the opportunities provided by the University and the College to expand the scope of their learning, which is positively reflected in the achievement of the programme objectives. The Panel appreciates that there is a learning environment in the University, which contribute to expanding students' knowledge and experience and supports the informal learning activities.

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

- There is a clear organizational structure that is adequate for the programme management, and the staff and students are familiar with it.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *20*

- The programme is delivered by academic members who are suitable for its needs, and their research output is appropriate and contributes to the programme delivery.
- There are transparent clear procedures related to the process of recruitment and appraisal of the faculty members.
- There is a management information system, which is adapted to the needs and aims of the programme.
- There are policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety of students' information, as well as, to maintain its accuracy and security.
- The available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs; in addition, resources and references, whether in hard copies or soft copies, are provided and meet the needs of both students and faculty members.
- There are various support services provided by the University to the students.
- There are arrangements taken by the university management to introduce new students to the programme, its services, and the provided activities.
- There is a learning environment in the University contributing to expanding knowledge and experience of the students, which supports the informal learning process.

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

- expedite the development and implementation of a formal plan, to recruit new faculty members who are experts, and to reduce the actual teaching workload of existing faculty members
- develop and implement an appropriate plan to help faculty members to be promoted academically
- develop a formal induction programme for new academics on the department, college, and university levels to introduce them to the university policies, regulations, resources, and various services, and evaluate the effectiveness of the induction programme
- provide an audio laboratory to cater for the needs of the programme and its courses
- further utilize the tracking reports and the updated data of the tracking systems to enhance making decisions that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the educational process.

2.16   **Judgement**

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

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *21*

3.   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

3.1   The UoB developed specific attributes for its graduates in a form of ULIOs including: communication skills, information technology skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, skills of information, professional and moral responsibility, and continuing self-learning. As per the SER, there are clear attributes for the graduates of the programme outlined within its educational outcomes and objectives, which have been mapped to the ILOs at the university level, in addition to mapping them with the CILOs whose achievement can be measured by using different assessment methods. The Panel finds that, in general, the CILOs greatly reflect the attributes of the graduates and cover the content of knowledge, communication skills, Information Technology, analytical, critical and creative thinking and how to obtain, retrieve and analyse information in an appropriate manner. In addition to that, the CILOs are appropriately mapped to the assessment tools. Furthermore, the Panel noted from its interviews with the students, faculty members, and employers during the site visit, that there is a common understanding of what is expected from the programme, and the outcomes it seeks to achieve. The Panel appreciates that there is an appropriate level of common understanding of the required attributes of the graduates, which is reflected on the CILOs. However, the Panel observed that the assessment of the achievement of these outcomes is still in its commencement (see paragraph: 3.4), and that the programme does not apply -in an integrated manner- the University System of Examinations Moderation and Students Assessment, as detailed in the following paragraphs (see paragraphs: 3.5 and 3.6). The Panel urges the College to expedite addressing this matter.

3.2   The Panel found through the SER that there are specific policies and procedures for both internal and external benchmarking practices, to identify how the academic standards of the programme are compatible with other similar programmes, where these practices include: the aim of benchmarking, how it is managed, and how its results are utilized. The SER states that the programme of Master of Arts in Arabic language and literature is compatible with other similar programmes in a number of regional universities. During the site visit meetings with the faculty members, the Panel found that these benchmarking practices have been implemented informally, and that they have focused mainly on comparing the course specifications, as well as, the course credit hours and the thesis rather than the academic standards. The provided evidence indicate that these benchmarking practices have significant impact in improving the curriculum and the required courses such as: the separation of the two courses 'Rhetoric and Ancient Criticism Issues', and 'Traditional and Generative Grammar Issues', and allocate them into four courses: 'Ancient Critique Issues',

'Rhetoric Issues', 'Traditional Grammar Issues', and 'Generative Grammar Issues'. In addition, there is a recommendation to increase the credit hours dedicated to the Master Thesis (see paragraph: 1.2). Moreover, the programme managers explained that these benchmarking practices have been implemented informally, because the implementation of formal benchmarking requires the University to sign agreements or memorandum of understanding with the universities that it intends to conduct benchmarking with, which requires long procedures, as the University Council is responsible for the final approval of such formal agreements. The Panel appreciates that there are informal benchmarking practices implemented by the College and the Department, and that their results contribute to developing the programme and its courses. However, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct formal benchmarking processes in line with the university policy in order to cover all aspects of the programme including the admission requirements, the academic standards of students and graduates of the programme, and to utilize their results in improving the programme.

3.3   The SER states that the programme adopts a rigorous policy and clear assessment procedures based on the assessment strategy adopted by the University, in order to ensure fairness and transparency of the grading process, as well as, the moderation for assessment of different courses. This strategy is available for all affiliates of the University *via* its websites, and in the document of study and examinations guide. The student guidebook includes general policies of assessment, and during interviews, students confirmed that they are aware of the assessment methods and new approaches, if any, through the specification form of courses distributed and discussed with them by the course instructor at the beginning of each academic semester. Results of assessments and students work are posted for the students to see prior to the final examinations. Upon examining the course files, it was confirmed to the Panel the inclusion of information about the assessment methods used and the distribution of grades over the semester examinations, assignments, projects and research papers, and the course final examinations. Furthermore, the panel was informed during interviews that the QAAC at the University and the QAO at the College conduct internal moderation for the course files periodically to ensure that the utilized assessment tools are compatible with the ILOs, and that they also develop recommendations for improvement. The evidence provided to the Panel indicates that the Department has established an internal committee to verify examinations on 20 September 2016. The resolution of the committee establishment identified its members, but it did not identify its terms of references, responsibilities, or the frequency of its meetings. The minutes of its meetings indicate that the nature of the committee's work is purely administrative, as it is responsible for the submission of the final examination papers by the faculty members on time, the allocation of examination observers, and ensuring the smooth running of the examination process. Moreover, there are clear and implemented policies for the evaluation of the Master Thesis (see paragraph: 3.10),

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *23*

which require the involvement of an external examiner. The course instructor is responsible for submitting the grades, as well as, the final evaluations electronically to the HoD, who in turn approves the grades before being verified and then published by the Deanship of Admission and Registration. The Panel appreciates that the assessment tools stated in the courses' specification are continually applied and students are aware of them. However, the Panel observed that the university plagiarism policy is not implemented in all student works. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the university policies and procedures of plagiarism are applied properly in the programme. The Panel also observed that the System of Examinations Moderation and Students Assessment is not applied comprehensively in the programme, and urges the College to address this matter (see paragraphs: 3.5 and 3.6).

3.4   The SER indicates that the Department applies specific mechanisms to ensure the alignment between the assessment processes and the CILOs. The academic staff member maps the assessment tools in the course to its identified learning outcomes, and then to the students' achievements through a form for the CILO assessment, where the achievement of every outcome is assessed. However, during interviews conducted with the faculty members, the Panel was informed that the programme has only applied this mechanism recently, and the faculty members have a limited knowledge about it, in addition to applying it only on a certain sample of courses. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that the faculty members have attended a workshop about measurement of the learning outcomes, but they still need further training to enable them to achieve that. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct intensive training courses about the assessment procedures and their alignment with the learning outcomes according to the Study and Examination System in UoB, and consequently expedite the implementation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of the CILOs achievement, and finally the achievement of the PILOs in a more rigorous manner. In addition to that, the Panel reviewed the file of the Master Thesis, and the mapping between works assigned to the student and the PILOs, where the Panel feels satisfied about this alignment (see paragraph: 3.10)

3.5   The UoB has a system of internal moderation in relation to developing assessment tools for students' achievement and granting grades, for all academic programmes in all colleges in general. Both of the Study and Examinations System of UoB, and the Assessment and Moderation Policy, states that there are mechanisms to verify the moderation of assessments, examinations, and grading in order to ensure compatibility and fairness of these processes. The SER states that the Department relies on the Examinations Committee in the Department, as well as, the QAC, and the QAO of the College to ensure fairness of the assessments. However, minutes of the Examinations Committee indicate that the role of this Committee is rather superficial, and limited only to administrative tasks, and does not include verification of the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *24*

examination questions to ensure whether or not they are appropriate to the level and content of the course as well as its ILOs. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to the Panel indicating that this committee has conducted any process to verify the moderation and fairness of the assessed examination papers. The programme managers mentioned that the QAAC at the University and the QAO at the College have conducted post-moderation for the examination papers, and for the student works. However, this matter has not been conducted by specialists or in a regular manner. Moreover, interviewed faculty members indicated during the site visit that they rely on their professional relations to ensure that the tools used in assessment and measurement are compatible with those learning outcomes that are expected to be measured, and that the granted grades are appropriate to the students' achievement, and that this process is implemented informally among the faculty members. The Panel observed that there are policies for pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools, and that the programme has limited experiences in applying them, despite being applied in an informal manner. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should activate the university arrangements related to pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools used in the programme, assess their effectiveness, and that the moderators should be specialists.

3.6 The UoB has a moderation policy for examinations and students assessment, which was approved by the University Council in 2015, and includes: the requirements of the internal and external moderations and mechanisms of pre and post moderations for examinations. Article (9) of the regulation related to the moderation of examinations and assessment of students requires 'external verification of the examinations and moderation of students' performance in assessment…in the academic programmes at the undergraduate level and the postgraduate level'. Furthermore, the evidence refers to an issued decision concerning the use of external moderators, though this decision has not been activated yet in the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature, programme, with the exception of the Master thesis, which requires the contribution of an external examiner coming from outside the UoB in each assessment committee. However, there is no mechanism to moderate the assessment process among the different committees. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of the assessment, where the feedback of the external moderation contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses.

3.7 The Panel examined the course files throughout different levels including: course specifications, examination papers, grade sheets, samples of students work, and the dissertations. The Panel noted that faculty members adhere to use the assessment tools incorporated in the courses specification, and the variety of activities and assignments required as well as the alignment between the type of works assigned to the students and the level of the course in general. The CILOs are assessed through a number of

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *25*

appropriate assignments, which require the student to acquire higher skills of analysis, critical thinking, and judgment, in line with what is expected from a Master student. Furthermore, the works of the students demonstrate their relevance to the Bahraini community, and the Panel is satisfied that the students have good, and in some cases, distinguished performance and achievement of different assignments. The Panel found evidence of creative thinking reflected in the sample of students' work that was provided during the site visit (e.g. the student assessed works in the courses: 'Traditional and Generative Grammar Issues', 'Poetry Text Analysis', 'Research Paper', and 'Master Thesis'). The Panel appreciates that the level of the students' achievement -as reflected in their assessed work- is aligned with the programme type and level, and is similar to what is expected from similar programmes.

3.8   The programme measures the level of graduates' achievements in a direct and indirect ways. As for the direct way, it is conducted through the courses assessment form, which is used in measuring the PILOs achievement. However, this mechanism is new, and it is not applied in all courses, consequently, it cannot be used currently to ascertain the level of the graduates achievement (see paragraph: 3.4). Moreover, the faculty members mentioned that the students' ability to submit good dissertations and research is considered as an evidence that the level of the graduates' achievement is compatible with the programme's aims and PILOs. The Panel reviewed a representative sample of Master dissertations and observed that the level of students' achievement is aligned with the required learning outcomes. The CGPA table in the SER shows that all the graduates (100%) had a CGPA of (3.5) out of (4) or above in the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, while (89%) of the graduates had a CGPA of (3.5) or above in the academic year 2015-2016. This is expected from a Master degree graduate, especially with the limited number of graduates (3, 4, and 9 in the academic years from 2013-2016). The Panel has met a group of the graduates of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, and observed that a number of them have distinguished administrative and educational positions; it also observed that they have, in general, the graduate attributes stated at the university and the programme levels. The Panel appreciates that the graduates' achievement meet the programme's aims and ILOs, as indicated in the final results and the quality of their research and dissertations, and as corroborated during the interviews conducted with them. Furthermore, the University verifies the students' achievements indirectly through the satisfaction surveys of employers and alumni about the programme and its outcomes. Despite the low level of responses to these surveys, and the lack of evidence about conducting them regularly, the Panel found through their results and during interviews with graduates of the programme and employers that there is a general level of satisfaction with the graduate achievements. The Panel urges the College to implement these surveys regularly (see paragraph: 3.8), to enable the programme to apply the university's indirect mechanisms to assess the level of the programme's graduates achievement.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *26*

3.9   The SER indicates that the Department, in cooperation with the Deanship of Admission and Registration, monitors the progress of the students of the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, and the study period that the student needs to complete. The provided statistics in the SER indicate that the number of admitted students in the programme increased over the last few years, and the ratio of male to female students tends to be balanced after the male ratio was higher than the female one. The SER states that all students of the programme are enrolled on a part time basis. The provided statistics indicate that only (11%) of the graduates completed the programme within (4) to (4.5) years, while the remaining students spent about (5) to (7) years in the programme. The programme team indicated that the prolonged duration of the study was often due to the delay in completing the Master Thesis, and due to the fact that all learners are also employees. During interviews, students confirmed that the reason for being late in completing the programme is their jobs, which often prevent them from registering regularly for all the semester courses, and they may take more time to complete the Master Thesis for the same reason. However, the Panel considers that the average period spent by the students to finish the programme is still long, and is not consistent with the study plan of the programme. Although the College has statistics about the admitted cohorts of the programme, the Panel was not provided with any evidence referring to the analysis of these statistics or the utilization of their results in improving the programme. There was not also any evidence provided about formal tracking, by the programme, of the graduates' different destinations. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts to conduct a detailed analysis of these cohorts and utilize it in developing the programme.

3.10   The study plan of the programme includes the 'Master Thesis' (ARABM590) course with (9) credit hours, where a student can register in it after he successfully completes the course 'Research Paper' (ARABM560). The programme follows the Postgraduate Studies System at the University of Bahrain, which regulates the procedures of scientific dissertations. Chapter 10 of this system, states several laws related to determining the supervisors and their academic ranks, in addition to selecting the dissertations' topics, and chapter 11 of the same system includes rules of selecting the discussion committee. Furthermore, there is a clear mechanism to implement these procedures, stipulated by the Postgraduate Studies System, which involves the establishment of a committee in the College for the postgraduate studies, in addition to a similar committee in the Department. The Panel observed that all these procedures and policies are available on the website of the Deanship for Postgraduate studies. Moreover, the Panel conducted interviews with students and faculty members who confirmed their awareness of these policies and procedures, as well as their adherence to them when they register in the thesis, and when formulating the discussion committee, which should include an external examiner from outside the University. In addition to that, interviewed faculty members indicated during the site visit that

the Master Thesis is important in the dissemination of Bahraini culture and promoting the Bahraini various heritage whether popular or linguistic, as well as in linking the research with the Bahraini community, which was observed in some dissertations in the university central library (the dissertation section). Furthermore, the external examiners -who talked to the Panel during the site visit- expressed their satisfaction with the level of the students in the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme, and with their response to the modifications required in the dissertations. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies and procedures for supervising the Master Thesis, stipulating the responsibilities and duties of both the student and the supervisor, that both the faculty and students are well-aware of, and that the level of students' research is appropriate to the PILOs.

3.11   The SER clarifies that the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies has recently established an advisory committee for the programme, to provide consultations in regard to the Master programme. It consists of (6) employers, and the programme's alumni who work in jobs related to the programme in the Ministry of Education, the Civil Service Bureau, the Ministry of Shura and Deputy Councils affairs. The Panel was informed during meeting with the members of this committee that the committee has not held any formal meeting until the date of the site visit, and that its members offer advice and proposals for the Department informally *via* phone calls or through individual meetings. The Panel found that the advisory committee includes an elite group of employers in the field of Arabic language and literature, who are able to enrich the programme with observations about the needs of the labour market. They indicated that there is a need in the labour market for the provision of several courses in Arabic calligraphy proficiency, and in the basic principles of traditional and generative grammars as well as rhetoric lessons; due to their importance in correcting the language of letters and correspondences addressed to and from the institutions of the kingdom of Bahrain. In addition, there is an advisory committee of students that was established by selecting (6) students from different academic years according to their academic performance and grades. During the Panel's meeting with them, they praised that the programme managers accepted their opinions about the programme development. The Panel recognizes that there is an advisory committee consisting of employers and alumni of the programme. The Panel, however, recommends that the College should activate the role of this committee, follow a clear methodology, and identify topics to be presented and reviewed by the committee, in addition to a mechanism of addressing observations presented by this committee to the programme.

3.12   The programme measures the satisfaction level of employers and alumni by using questionnaires designed for this purpose. The programme has measured the satisfaction of the alumni through these forms, it has received feedback from (14) graduates and (5) employers, which does not represent a sample with a statistically

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *28*

significant results, in addition there was no evidence about conducting these surveys by the Department regularly. The questionnaire results indicate that there is a general satisfaction about the programme, and that there is a need to develop the students' abilities in the area of computers and group work skills. The panel has met a number of employers and alumni of the programme who expressed their general satisfaction about the programme and its outcomes. They also confirmed that the programme focuses on forming experiences related to modern critique approaches and its relationship with what was offered by the longstanding approaches, in order to form a scientific outcome in issues that are relevant to the Arabic language and literature in a more deep and specialized manner. The programme also qualifies its graduates to work in many sectors in the Bahraini society, and provides them with skills of conducting scientific research in all fields of the Arabic language including, the sounds, structure, synthesis, dictionaries, rhetoric, critique, literature, and dialects. The Panel appreciates that there is an appropriate level of satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes, and urges the College to implement effective measures periodically, to measure the satisfaction of alumni and employers with the level of the programme's graduates, and the achievement of the its aims and learning outcomes (see paragraph: 4.8).

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

- There is an appropriate level of common understanding for the required specifications of graduates which are reflected on the intended learning outcomes of the courses.
- There are informal benchmarking practices implemented by the College and the Department, and that their results contribute to developing the programme and its courses.
- The assessment tools stated in the courses specification are continually applied and students are aware of them.
- The level of students' achievement -as expressed through their assessed work- is compatible with the level and type of the programme, and it is similar to what is expected in similar programmes.
- Graduate's achievement meet the programme aims and learning outcomes, as indicated by the final results, and the quality of the research and dissertations, and as corroborated during the interviews with graduates,.
- There are clear policies and procedures for supervising the Master Thesis, which stipulate the responsibilities and duties of both the student and the supervisor, which both faculty members and students are well-aware of, and the level of students' research is appropriate to the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *29*

- Employers and alumni of the programme have an appropriate level of satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

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

- conduct formal benchmarking processes in line with the university policy in order to cover all aspects of the programme, including the admission requirements, the academic standards of students and graduates of the programme, and utilize their results in improving the programme
- ensure the implementation of policies and procedures related to inspecting academic plagiarism in the programme properly
- conduct intensive training courses about assessment procedures and their alignment with the learning outcomes, according to the Study and Examination System of the UoB, and expedite the activation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of the achievement of the intended learning outcome of the courses, and finally the achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme in a more rigorous matter
- activate the university arrangements related to pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools used in the programme, and that it should assess their effectiveness, and that the moderators should be specialists
- implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of the assessment, where the feedback of the external moderation contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses
- utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts, in conducting a detailed analysis about the academic cohorts and utilize its result in improving the programme
- ensure an effective for the advisory committee, follow an explicit methodology, identify topics presented and reviewed by the committee, and determine a mechanism for processing observations provided to the programme.

3.15   **Judgement**

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

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts – Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *30*

4.   Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

4.1   The UoB has policies and institutional systems covering different academic and administrative aspects, including: examinations, students, scientific research, continuous learning, community engagement, graduates, administrative affairs, information technology, security, safety, health, faculty members, the academic promotion system, the academic advising system, scholarships, and the programme of Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice, and the programme of continuous development for faculty members. In addition, there are regulations for the postgraduate programmes such as the System of Postgraduate Studies of UoB and its appendices, the UoB Theses Writing Manual, and the Procedures of Appointing Academic Supervisor, and the Formation of the Discussion Panel and Granting the Degree. There are also policies related to quality such as the University Policy for Quality Assurance, the Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy of Programmes, the Benchmarking Policy, and the System of Offering the Academic Programmes and Courses, etc. The Panel is of the view that these policies and systems meet the programme needs. They are available on the official website of the University for all academic members, who indicated during interviews that they are aware of these policies *via* different channels including newsletters of the university management. Moreover, faculty members express their views about those policies through the official councils. UoB ensures implementation of these policies and systems through the following structure: QAAC at the university level, quality assurance offices at the college level, alongside the QAC consisting of some faculty members of the College of Arts. The college deans, as well as the department heads, participate in applying these policies and systems at the programme level. Furthermore, senior management stated that these policies are subject to periodical review every five years, and some faculty members participate in this review, as well as quality assurance officials at the university, colleges and departments levels, as per the System of Suggestion, Review and Development of Policies. With respect to reviewing the policies and regulations of postgraduate programmes, the Panel learned that it is done through the postgraduate studies committee at the department level, which raises its suggestion of modification to the Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally to the University Council. Consequently, the Panel appreciates that the documented policies and institutional systems are in place to meet the programme's needs, and faculty members are well informed about these policies. However, the Panel observed that the implementation of some policies is not achieved as required, such as the policy of teaching workload, moderation, plagiarism, benchmarking, communication with

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts‒Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *31*

alumni, advisory councils, and others (as mentioned in some paragraphs of this Report). The Panel urges the College to ensure the consistent implementation of university policies at the programme level, as indicated in different paragraphs of this Report.

4.2   The decree-law of the establishment and organization of UoB regulates the management of the academic programmes, and according to the SER, the Master of Arts in Arabic language and literature programme belongs to the Department of Arabic language and Islamic Studies in the College of Arts. The programme includes several committees such as the Committee of Postgraduate Studies, the Committee of Scientific Research, Conferences, and Academic Development, the Culture Committee, the QAC, and the Academic Promotion Committee. These Committees usually meet according to work requirements, and report their recommendations to the HoD, who in turn takes the necessary steps, and raises those recommendations to the university administration *via* the communication channels with the Dean of the College, or takes the appropriate action within the Department. According to interviews conducted by the Panel, the academic responsibility of the programme is assigned to the HoD in collaboration with the faculty members, as well as, the programme's coordinator, and the Department Council is responsible for making decisions and recommendations in accordance with the university laws and regulations. In addition, the Deanship of Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research in the University follows on, and implement the regulations and study systems of the postgraduate studies. There are clear lines of different responsibilities, as the guidebook of faculty members outlines authorities and roles of the faculty members, the Dean, and the President of the University. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there is a responsible leadership for the effective management of the programme. However, the Panel observed that the duties of the HoD are not only limited to the academic and administrative aspects of the programme, as they include academic workloads that may impact the effectiveness of his leadership role in the Department and result in scattering his efforts between teaching on one hand and academic and administrative supervision on the other hand. The Panel advises the College to review the teaching load of the HoD, to ensure that it is adequate for his academic and administrative duties for the programme in general.

4.3   There are policies and procedures for the quality assurance at the university, college, and department levels, where the QAAC in the University monitors works of the quality assurance units at the colleges, while the QAO at the College -which is directly under the College Dean - monitors the Quality Assurance System in the Programmes. At the department level, there is a QAC that includes the coordinators of the programmes, and the Panel found that this committee ensures meeting the needs of the quality system related to the programme. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there are formal policies and procedures that are appropriate to the quality assurance at the

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *32*

university and the college levels. During interviews, the academic members indicated that they have participated in the quality assurance activities and that some improvements were applied in the programme such as introducing the course assessment form, and that the QAAC has formed a committee in 2016 to implement an academic audit for the College of Arts and its various departments. The QAAC has also provided a guide for quality policies and procedures in the academic programmes. However, this guide is published in English, so it may be difficult to be understood and comprehended. According to the statements of the college managers during their interviews, the quality assurance unit has informally translated a number of quality assurance systems incorporated in the report. Hence, the Panel advises translating this guide into Arabic. The Panel noted lack of consistency in applying policies, and quality assurance mechanisms in the programme, as the use of the course assessment form was used only in few courses. Furthermore, monitoring the results of these forms is still ineffective, in addition to observations made by the Panel in different parts of this Report about the benchmarking processes, and the moderation of the assessment tools, alongside what was mentioned in the college audit report that was issued in June 2016, and the Panel found no evidence of addressing its recommendations. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should improve the used approaches for monitoring and assessing the quality assurance management system in the programme, and measures their effectiveness.

4.4   As per the SER, the QAO at the College presented several training courses and workshops for faculty members, and supporting staff, in order to introduce the quality concept for them, and build their capabilities to achieve the quality requirements in the academic programmes, in addition to forming the quality culture, and enhancing the understanding of faculty members of the quality assurance system, policies and procedures adopted by the university management, the College, and the Department, as mentioned during interviews with the director of the QAAC, the director of the QAO, and faculty members. The Panel found that the number of training courses is insufficient to achieve the expected awareness and understanding by the academic members of all quality assurance issues. The Panel noted during interviews with faculty members that they have an acceptable understanding of the quality assurance requirements and their roles in ensuring the effectiveness of learning. Nevertheless, while reviewing the course, the Panel noted that the concept of quality is not effectively evident within the work of the faculty members, as the emphasis is often placed on achieving the requirements of the UoB quality system in terms of form rather than content. Thus, the Panel acknowledges that there is an acceptable understanding by the faculty members for of the quality mechanisms and requirements. The Panel also notes the efforts made by the programme management to disseminate the quality culture among them, and advises the college to continue embedding this culture, to become a routine self-practice, which ensures a high level of achievement of the programme content and outcomes

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *33*

4.5   The UoB has the System of Offering and Developing Academic Programmes and Courses, which was approved in 2013, and is available on its website. The system includes a description of how to offer and develop the academic programmes and courses, and how to stop or suspend them; there are also forms for all the functions of this system. The Panel was informed about this system, and after careful examination, it was revealed to the Panel that this system states that developing a new programme or improving a current one should take into account the needs of the labour market, represented by public and private institutions, and professional associations benefiting from the programme outcomes, in addition to surveying opinions of the beneficiaries such as the future students and others. According to this system, a specific committee is formed at the department level to study the feasibility of delivering a new programme and to present all required documents to the department's curriculum committee. Then the HoD presents the report to the Department Council to discuss and generate a recommendation about it. After that, the curriculum committee of the Department presents the recommendation to the College Dean in order to submit it to the curriculum committee at the college level, and if it approves the recommendation, it is raised to the University Council, which in turn raises it to the curriculum committee at the University. The Panel is satisfied that there is a documented policy at the university level, which is appropriate for developing and offering the academic programmes.

4.6   The SER indicates that the team of the programme has reviewed and improved it throughout the academic year based on a group of internal mechanisms, as the QAAC conducts periodic visits to the programme, to ensure the implementation of the quality assurance mechanisms, and verify the academic standards of the programme, which results in a comprehensive report according to which, the Department presents an improvement plan for the programme. Furthermore, the QAO in the College is responsible for monitoring what has been achieved concerning the improvement plan and the internal moderation of the course files, and generate reports. During interviews, it was indicated that the faculty members have participated in the self-evaluation process through the committee responsible for preparing the assessment reports related to the achievement of CILOs of each course, which are subsequently used to measure the achievement of PILOs in general, while, until the date of this visit, this mechanism has not been applied to all courses of the programme. The university policies require the Department to evaluate the programme and submit an SER to the QAAC at the University. The report should include the assessment of students' achievement, the educational objectives of the programme, the utilization of the stakeholders' feedback after analyzing it, the preparation of an improvement plan and tracking its implementation. However, there was no evidence referring to conducting an annual SER for the programme regularly. Despite the availability of evidence referring to the development of the programme and its courses, the Panel observed, during interviews conducted with the faculty members and the programme team, that

there was confusion between the requirements of the comprehensive periodic review and the annual continuing review of the programme. Moreover, the provided evidence and information obtained by the Panel during the site visit interviews indicate that both the Department and the College do not adopt clear documented mechanisms for the regular annual review of the programme, in addition to the lack of evidence that refers to providing annual improvement plans for the programme. Consequently, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate arrangements and procedures at the university level, and notes the efforts of the programme managers and faculty members in improving the programme. The Panel advises the College to take the necessary arrangements to implement annual reviews of the programme at the department and the college levels, as well as, to enhance the mechanisms of tracking the implementation of its improvement plans.

4.7   The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy of the Programmes in UoB states that the academic programmes should be subjected to a periodic review in order to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes, the effectiveness of the curriculum, and the utilization of the stakeholders' feedback in the review process. According to the manual of the internal quality assurance issued by the QAAC at the University, these reviews include the programme objectives, the PILOs, the CILOs, the course specifications, the teaching methods, and the internship, in addition to reviewing the standards of the students' admission, as well as, the regulations of remedial courses. The review policy also includes surveys of students, employers, ministries, and institutions related to the programme outputs. The quality manual also indicates that the process of monitoring recommendations and decisions generated as a result of the review process is conducted by the QAAC in collaboration with the QAO at the College. The QAAC has conducted a review for the programme in 2016, and generated a report in this regard. In light of this report, the Department submitted an improvement plan for the programme. The Panel, however, observed that this review did not cover all the programme aspects, and that feedback from the stakeholders was very limited. In addition, there was no sufficient evidence indicating that such reviews are conducted continually and regularly and the mechanisms of tracking the application of improvement plans were weak. Moreover, all members of the Panel are from the university staff without including any external element as required by the UoB policy in this regard. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should implement the university policy of periodic programme review in a holistic and continual manner, and develop mechanisms for monitoring and tracking the implementation of improvement plans.

4.8   As stated in the SER, the College gathers the feedback of the programme stakeholders, using students' exit-surveys, course assessment forms, and course instructors' evaluations at the end of each semester, in addition to the employers and alumni surveys. The provided evidence indicates that the University has analyzed feedback

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *35*

from these questionnaires to identify points of strength and others that need to be improved. However, there was insufficient evidence concerning the regular collection of feedback, and the use of its results, through systematic mechanisms, to improve the programme. The SER indicates that the programme relies on feedback from the meetings of the advisory committee consisting of employers and alumni. However, this committee has been recently established, and it has not held a meeting until the date of this visit. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should continue to develop its mechanisms of surveying all stakeholders' opinions -especially external ones- and to analyze the results periodically and regularly, in addition to informing all its internal and external stakeholders about the results.

4.9   The SER states that the UoB organized a programme for the purpose of developing the capabilities of faculty members, and it also developed the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership Skills to provide faculty members with professional development. The Unit offers a postgraduate programme in academic practice for new faculty members and the continuous academic development programme for experienced faculty members. During interviews, the faculty members confirmed that they have benefited from these programmes, and that the Unit has measured their satisfaction at the end of each activity. This is in addition to the multiple training courses, short workshops, and lectures held by the QAAC to establish the quality culture and improve the programme outcomes. Furthermore, training courses and workshops are also conducted by the Centre of Measurement, Evaluation, and Academic Development in the University, to present topics related to building aptitude tests, measurement methods as well as induction and orientation courses in various topics, in order to train faculty on how to employ the best assessment approaches for evaluating student's performance. Faculty members have participated and attended these training courses and workshops. The Panel appreciates the efforts made by the UoB to provide several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership, in order to develop the teaching and professional practices of new and senior faculty members. Nevertheless, the Panel observed that the professional development needs of faculty members -at the present time- are not identified according to a systematic organized approach, nor are they related to the formal evaluation of their performance, according to the university policy. Therefore, the Panel advises the University to base the professional development of faculty members on an analysis of their academic needs, and in the light of the annual evaluation results of their performance, and to adopt a mechanism to measure the impact of these practices on the performance of the faculty members.

4.10   The SER states that the college management is keen to develop the study plan of the programme, in order to be in line with the needs of the labour market, and that this is done through feedback from the employers and alumni. During the site visit interviews, faculty members indicated that they have utilized the results of these

BQA

Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *36*

surveys in developing the research aspect, as well as, improving the skills of the students in courses. However, the nature of such surveys does not provide information about the labor market needs on the long term. Furthermore, the Panel did not find evidence about conducting comprehensive and periodic studies to scope the labour market needs, despite their importance in developing the programme, especially in the light of the programme's limited ability to attract new students. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should implement periodic, comprehensive, and rigorous studies to assess the labour market needs both on the long-term and short-term, and to utilize the results in developing the programme.

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

- There are institutional documented policies and procedures that are adequate for meeting the programme needs, and are available for the faculty members.
- There is a responsible leadership for managing the programme effectively.
- There are formal appropriate policies and procedures for the quality assurance at the university and the college levels.
- The University provide several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership Skills, in order to develop the teaching and professional practices for new and senior faculty members.

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

- improve the used approaches for monitoring and assessing the quality assurance management system in the programme, and measures their effectiveness
- implement the university policy of periodic programme review in a holistic and continual manner, and develop mechanisms for monitoring and tracking the implementation of improvement plans
- continue to develop its mechanisms of surveying all stakeholders' opinions - especially external ones- and to analyze the results periodically and regularly, in addition to informing all its internal and external stakeholders about the results
- implement periodic, comprehensive, and rigorous studies to assess the labour market needs both on the long-term and short-term, and to utilize the results in developing the programme.

4.13   **Judgement**

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

5. Conclusion

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

There is confidence in the Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature offered by the University of Bahrain.

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Programmes-within-College Review Report - University of Bahrain – College of Arts– Master of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature– 3 - 7 December 2017   *38*