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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
Programme Review Report

Kingdom University
College of Architectural Engineering and Design
Bachelor in Interior Design
Kingdom of Bahrain

Site Visit Date: 24 – 26 October 2022

HA069-C3-R069

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Acronyms

APR	Academic Programme Review
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre
BID	Bachelor in Interior Design
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CAED	College of Architectural Engineering and Design
CC-QAEC	College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
CC-TLAC	College Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee
CIDA	Council for Interior Design Accreditation
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
IAACGU	Internship, Alumni Affairs and Career Guidance Unit
IACL	Industrial Advisory Council
IAU	Institutional Assessment Unit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KU	Kingdom University
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OHS	Occupational Health and Safety
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAA-UK	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education- United Kingdom
QMS	Quality Management System
SBID	Society of British and International Interior Design
SDU	Staff Development Unit

SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System
SPAGU	Strategic Planning and Governance Unit
UC-TLAC	University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee

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I. Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews, where the whole institution is assessed; and the Academic Programme Reviews (APRs), where the quality of teaching, learning and academic standards are assessed in academic programmes within various colleges according to specific standards and indicators as reflected in its Framework.

Following the revision of the APR Framework at the end of Cycle 1 in accordance with the BQA procedure, the revised APR Framework (Cycle 2) was endorsed as per the Council of Ministers' Resolution No.17 of 2019. Thereof, in the academic year (2019-2020), the DHR commenced its second cycle of programme reviews.

The Cycle 2 APR Review Framework is based on four main Standards and 21 Indicators, which form the basis of the APR Reports of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

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

Standard 1: **The Learning Programme**

Standard 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

Standard 3: **Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**

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

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') decides whether each indicator, within a standard, is 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed'. From these judgements on the indicators, the Panel additionally determines whether each of the four standards is 'Satisfied' or 'Not Satisfied', thus leading to the Programme's overall judgement, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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The APR Review Report begins with providing the profile of the Programme under review, followed by a brief outline of the judgement received for each indicator, standard, and the overall judgement.

The main section of the report is an analysis of the status of the programme, at the time of its actual review, in relation to the review standards, indicators and their underlying expectations.

The report ends with a Conclusion and a list of Appreciations and Recommendations.

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II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Kingdom University
College/ Department*	College of Architectural Engineering and Design
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor in Interior Design
Qualification Approval Number	07-1633
NQF Level	
Validity Period on NQF	
Number of Units*	51
NQF Credit	
Programme Aims*	The Bachelor in Interior Design programme at Kingdom University aims to: **Students' awareness and knowledge** 1. Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the theoretical background and technical specifications in the fields of interior design and the manner in which these are applied practically when implementing spatial design of existing and predictable projects. **Students' practical skills** 2. Develop students' practical skills to conceptualize, create a holistic design and communicate projects with professionals and clients. **Student's critical thinking skills** 3. Develop students' skills to critically evaluate both their own and other people's interior design solutions to prepare and motivate them to be reflective practitioners or progress to further higher-level studies - appraisal and development skills necessary for joining the interior design practice and for further post graduate studies. **Students' employability** 4. Develop students' teamwork and interpersonal communication skills through involving them in KU design society to operate in the challenging employment market and when interacting with clients. **Students' professional practice and lifelong learning skills**

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	5. Develop students' awareness of the professional interior design standards in which the interior design engineers operate their responsibilities toward the profession, the wider society and the environment.
	6. Develop students' understanding of 'real life' work within the profession by providing opportunities for professional experience thorough internship, internal and external collaborative activities and inculcate an enthusiasm for lifelong learning.
	Students' ethical and community service skills
	7. Develop the students' awareness of community service skills for both local, regional, and global contexts e.g., their ability to respond to global issues such as climate change and 4th industrial revolution when developing their design work.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	**A. Knowledge and Understanding Skills** **A01:** Demonstrate an understanding of values, vocabulary and design principles including physical, aesthetic, contextual and environmental considerations for human-centered design approaches. **A02:** Demonstrate knowledge of the significance of creative precedents works, history and theories of architecture, design and art with emphasis on the impact of these in a contemporary technological context. **A03:** Demonstrate in depth knowledge of construction engineering technologies, systems, materials, technology, demolition, rehabilitation and services to achieve sustainable, healthy, comfortable and safe interior spaces. **A04:** Demonstrate an understanding of the professional context of designers and construction industry, including interior design codes, regulations, management, and construction techniques. **B. Subject-Specific Skills** **B01:** Survey and record detailed site measurements; review and produce scaled technical documentations for spatial design projects based on decision of "design-freeze" stage to facilitate communication with different designers' context. **B02:** Derive Design Theories and histories and implement a systematic design process that respond to design brief, users' needs, and site constrains harmonized with aesthetic and considering socio-cultural aspects. **B03:** Experiment and integrate technical details, construction technology, engineering expertise, finishing materials, codes and regulations that are required to develop effective sustainable design solutions of interior spaces and products. **B04**: Observe, investigate and inquire information to develop design brief and ideas making connections between concepts, process, context and design approaches.

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	C. Thinking skills
	C01: Analyze, interpret information and materials relevant to contextual, technological, engineering and sustainable aspects to solve problems as design briefs' response
	C02: Generate innovative design ideas and concepts of interior spaces and products within various types of built environments.
	C03: Set criteria and evaluate interior design proposals and alternatives to make reasoned decisions which consider a global perspective and cultural, economic, professional, technological, environmental, industrial and legal context.
	C04: Appraise existing buildings in term of environment, function, psychology, economy, technology and buildings' codes and regulations to develop a design brief of spatial design projects that meets users' needs.
	C05: Judge design presentations and communications for professional and lay audiences through peer-review and assessment.
	D. General and Transferrable Skills (Other Skills Relevant to Employability and Personal Development)
	D01: conduct various types of research by applying appropriate methodologies with respect of professional ethics and formulate argumentative decisions aligned with design theories, principles, context and construction laws, regulations and codes.
	D02: communicate and debate design proposals and final projects' documentations *via* effective written, verbal and visual media for designs' reviews, juries and portfolio presentations.
	D03: work independently and cooperatively with multi-interdisciplinary professions in different contexts including teamwork, leadership and collective presentation.
	D04: demonstrate self-management, lifelong learning and professional development skills based on identifying and addressing their own strengths and needs.
	D05: demonstrate professional responsibility and ethics towards the enhancement of life quality and development of communities within environmental and smart design approach.

* Mandatory fields

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III. Judgement Summary

<div style="text-align:center; font-weight:bold; font-size:large;">
The Programme's Judgement: Confidence
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Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	**The Learning Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
Standard 2	**Efficiency of the Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 3	**Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Partially Addressed

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Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Addressed
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Partially Addressed
Standard 4	**Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Partially Addressed

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IV. Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

There is a clear academic planning framework for the programme, reflected in clear aims which relate to the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the college.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- Commencing in 2008, the Bachelor in Interior Design (BID) programme was developed with an established planning process ensuring appropriate alignment with the requirements of the Higher Education Council (HEC), the BQA, and the set direction of Kingdom University (KU) strategic plan. Since its inception, the programme has undergone several internal and external reviews as per the Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy and according to a schedule for detailed programme reviews along with related institutional and role responsibilities.

- There is evidence of BID benchmarking against Bahraini, regional, and international academic programmes, including a subject benchmarking statement of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education-United Kingdom (QAA - UK) for art and design, the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA), and the Society of British and International Interior Design (SBID) criteria in reviewing and developing the programme. This shows a clear attempt at aligning the programme with international occupational standards, which was further confirmed during interviews with the programme's Senior Management. In response to this, the Panel advises the programme to continue towards obtaining international professional accreditation, by first working on developing a learning outcomes comparison map to highlight the gaps of skills required by CIDA and SBID.

- The BID programme has recently applied for placement on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and was reviewed accordingly on June 30th, 2022. The programme is in the process of fulfilling NQF conditions regarding its placement. Nevertheless, evidence

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provided to the Panel illustrates the programme's alignment with the NQF design requirements, relevant mapping and confirmation processes.

- With respect to potential risks to the quality of the programme, these are continuously monitored. As example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the programme team identified several potential risks to the delivery of the programme and its academic standards, as the move to online teaching and learning was a clear challenge for such a design-based programme. However, since 2021-2022, the teaching and learning reverted to face-to-face provision. Furthermore, the Panel was informed during interviews with the Senior Management that being a private institution, KU could face the risk of business discontinuity. The University tries to manage this risk by continuously developing its programmes and equipping its colleges with the latest technologies and providing in them appropriate facilities and workspaces. The University has also worked hard on putting in place a robust staff development plan to improve teaching and learning within its programmes. In addition, the College has a risk management register and plan in place, to monitor the status of the programme and immediately begin to implement any mitigating actions once any risk is identified.

- The programme has a qualification title that is clear and concise, which accurately reflects the content of the programme and is correctly documented on the university website, certificates, and other programme-related documents. The programme, additionally, has seven aims that are clear and regularly revised, and which appropriately align with the missions and goals of the College of Architectural Engineering and Design (CAED) and the University.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and these are appropriate for the level of the degree and meet the NQF requirements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- Skills, knowledge competencies, and behaviors are the core of the seven defined graduate attributes of CAED, which are reflected in the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) of the BID. The attributes focus on design creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, effective communication, leadership, entrepreneurship, pragmatism and in-depth knowledge, and life-long learning. Comprehensive mapping of the graduate attributes with the PILOs has been undertaken in the programme along with mapping of courses to the PILOs, SBID and CIDA standards. These mappings show that the PILOs meet international norms and there is evidence that indicates the compliance of the PILOs with NQF requirements. They are thus clearly stated and written in measurable terms and

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are appropriate for the type and level of the programme's qualification, while reflecting the different dimensions in learning in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies that learners are expected to acquire through the programme's courses.

- The PILOs are also mapped to the programme aims, which target the development of student awareness and knowledge, practical skills, critical thinking skills, employability, professional practice with lifelong learning skills and ethical and community service skills. The programme tries to achieve these aims through the different courses it offers, all of which include in their specifications detailed mappings of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) with PILOs. A review of the specifications by the Panel indicated that, overall, the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of each course are consonant with its level and contents, and their appropriateness is ensured through related NQF mapping processes and also through benchmarking exercises against professional bodies that accredit academic provision of architecture and architecture-related degrees (e.g., CIDA and SBID standards).

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

The curriculum is organised to provide academic progression of learning complexity guided by the NQF levels and credits, and it illustrates a balance between knowledge and skills, as well as theory and practice, and meets the norms and standards of the particular academic discipline.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- In 2020-2021, the CAED began implementing a new BID curriculum after having revised in detail its study plan. Many changes had been introduced across the domains of the programme as a result of the revisions, and clear and detailed justifications were provided for them by the programme, whereby the emphasis was to strengthen the year-on-year progression in the study plan based on NQF guidelines.

- The curriculum extends over a total period of four years including 142 credit hours covered in 52 courses. This is represented through the programme's study plan, which the Panel finds to be clear and well-organized, showing appropriate progression year on year and course on course in terms of design, problem-solving complexity, NQF levels and credits, and pre-requisite requirements. The study plan also demonstrates a good balance between theory and practice, and between knowledge and skills in the curriculum. This is by ensuring among the different semesters a reasonable distribution of varied courses and aspects related to interior design, such as: theory, technology, humanity, and design, wherein a practical design studio course is included in almost every semester of the plan. However, the Panel noticed in the plan that there are on average seven modules per semester, which contrasts with the norm elsewhere of six modules. The Panel, thus, recommends that the College should consider revising the BID curriculum to reduce the

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number of courses per semester, so as to allow better focus by students on their specific courses and to conserve resources.

- A key strategy for updating the BID curriculum has been benchmarking where concordance with relevant standards and logic of sequencing have all influenced the revision process. Formal and comprehensive benchmarking has been undertaken as well as through Memoranda of Understanding with two local institutions: Gulf University and Ahlia University, with informal benchmarking additionally happening against several regional and international universities. Benchmarking has also been undertaken against the international SBID and CIDA standards where alignment is being guided by external reviewers of the BID programme, as mentioned in the SER and confirmed in the interview with the external stakeholders. The Panel is of the view that such benchmarking activities help verify the balance between theory and practice, and between knowledge and skills in the BID curriculum.

- The course specifications show that the collection of textbooks and references used in the courses is, in general, current and relevant to recent research findings and professional practices. The Panel notes that the collection is being added to in a meaningful manner through a resource committee available to monitor and look after the necessary references and textbooks of different programmes and to ensure their availability among the university library's collection.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The University has a comprehensive teaching and learning policy and procedure which seek to ensure that the programme provides a range of teaching and learning opportunities and methodologies, as well as guidance and support structures associated with teaching and learning, to maximise the advantages of these opportunities for students. Relevant and appropriate teaching methods that range from academic classroom contexts to design studios to external visits and industry engagements are listed in the policy. The procedure operationalises the roles, responsibilities and procedural details relevant to the implementation of teaching and learning strategies.

- The teaching and learning methods included in the programme specifications document align with those in the university's teaching and learning policy, where lectures; board demonstrations; group/class discussions; research project; external input; video & audio clips; essays, reports, exercises, and case studies; and classroom activities and

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participation are cited. Evidence provided to the Panel demonstrates adherence to these varied methods coupled with assessment methods that enable ILOs' attainment. The Panel finds the teaching and related assessment methods appropriate for a professional design-based programme, where studio design and external engagements are prominent and whose teaching staff are continuously active in enriching their teaching through engagement in training workshops and research.

- E-learning at KU is a facet of teaching and learning that is in place to support physical classroom education and there are clear guidelines for it. Interviews with faculty and students confirmed that online resources such as e-text books, e-courses, online video demonstrations, and online communication and support are provided, to help students with the achievement of their learning outcomes. Also, although teaching and learning shifted to face-to-face after COVID-19, and since 2021-2022 specifically, KU continues to provide flexible e-learning when needed.

- The Panel finds the rich and diverse range of formal and informal teaching and learning methods used in the courses, in addition to the non-formal learning experiences provided in the university environment, as full of potential to encourage students to research, create, and innovate, while providing them with ample opportunities to apply their theoretical knowledge in professional practice contexts and to direct their own learning toward professional development and growth. Professionally, the programme prepares students for a career as professionals in interior design, where exposure to professional practice is critical and a main focus for teaching and learning. Guest industry lectures in the programme are one way that students have interacted with senior professionals. Other modes have included site visits; case studies and internships with professional firms. Additionally, teaching staff with professional industry experience are able to blend theory with practice in their courses. Research is an additional strand in the programme, where many faculty members are engaged in research activities and this enables them to engage their students in their research projects where technology has a significant role.

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

Suitable assessment arrangements, which include policies and procedures for assessing students' achievements, are in place and are known to all relevant stakeholders.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The university assessment and moderation policy, which is comprehensive and detailed, is the overarching policy which all assessment and moderation procedures follow. The policies and related procedures relevant to students are summarized in the Student Handbook, while faculty are briefed on the principles of PILOs and CILOs and their assessment during orientation, since they are central to course assessment and

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moderation. A review of these policies and procedures by the Panel indicated their appropriateness for the level and type of the BID programme. Additionally, an examination of the course portfolios and interviews with faculty, students, and alumni confirmed regular and sound adherence, overall, to their guidelines, including those relevant to the assessment of research assignments and projects, where applicable, and the ethical principles of relevance to them.

- Formative education is a major strategy for the programme. Frequent assessment and feedback, oral and written, provides students with timely inputs so that they may learn and improve. Course Coordinators and faculty members confirmed during interviews that formative assessment is relied heavily on mostly in the design studio where it takes place through tutorials, interim reviews, and pre-juries on students works. Students, as well, confirmed the reliance of the programme on formative assessment as a mechanism for providing them with prompt feedback on their performance, and expressed general satisfaction with it.

- Summative functions are well defined at the university level in the assessment policy, with application detailed in the specific programme courses. Students are therefore aware of the grading system and the requirements for graduation form the programme and college.

- The university assessment moderation procedure merges well with the assessment procedure. Detailed regulations are provided for the implementation of assessment moderation. Both internal and external moderation are applied to achieve a balance and fair assessment of students' submitted works. In interviews, the external moderators and the reviewers of the programme in general, acknowledged that, overall, one of the strengths of the programme consists in the good mechanisms it has in place for designing, marking assessments, and giving feedback to students. This is in addition to the good alignment in the programme between the design work and the theoretical aspects.

- In the case of a student not agreeing with their grade, they can submit an appeal to the University Grievance Committee. During the interview with students, they exhibited clear awareness of the appeal process and explained that they are informed about it during their induction into the programme. However, Senior Management confirmed to the Panel that the Department receives very few appeals per semester, mainly due to the robust moderation of marking mechanism put in place, which helps ensure the accuracy and fairness of grading students' works.

- In terms of academic misconduct, students in the programme are aware of what constitutes appropriate conduct and understand the penalties for misconduct such as academic plagiarism and cheating. When cases of misconduct are identified, the College Misconduct Committee convenes to consider the evidence and to recommend appropriate action. Based on the evidence provided in the form of samples of minutes of meetings for

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this committee, the Panel was able to conclude that misconduct cases in the Department are well-recorded, well-documented, and handled according to policy.

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Standard 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 2.1: Admitted Students

There are clear admission requirements, which are appropriate for the level and type of the programme, ensuring equal opportunities for both genders, and the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The admission policy and procedures are clearly documented in the programme specification and published in the Student Handbook. The process is handled by the Admission and Registration Department and the numbers provided indicate fair opportunities between male and female applicants. A noticeable higher number of female applicants than male applicants is evident. Also, in relation to fair opportunities of admission, the admission form, it includes a slot for applicants to declare any special needs that they may have, so that the university resources and premises can be adjusted to support them if accepted into the programme.

- The admission criteria include a high school degree with a cumulative average of a minimum of 60%; a pass mark in the university English and Mathematics Placement tests; and a pass mark in the architecture and design knowledge and skills test for applicants. There is evidence that the admission criteria and requirements are fairly implemented, as they are rigidly monitored and audited by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre (AQAC), as was confirmed during the interviews. The University provides support for inadequately prepared students to enter and progress in the programme, through relevant foundation courses that are offered for applicants with an average below 60% or who underperform in the required entrance examinations. Despite this support, however, the Panel considers the minimal requirement of 60% low for the level and nature of the BID programme, especially when compared with the minimal requirements of similar programmes locally and regionally. The Panel, thus, recommends that the College should seriously consider revising its admission criteria, to make the cumulative high school average requirement higher than 60%.

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- The admission policy and procedure document also provides a clear transfer policy for students transferring from other institutions, who are required to meet certain HEC regulations before being accepted into the programme. As for internal transfers within the University, their regulations are set out in the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure and, in practice, the university's Student Information System (SIS) is used for automatically evaluating common courses between programmes for internal transfers. Courses that are not common are evaluated by the College Admission Committee and this takes place for both Internal and External transfers.

- Interviews with senior management and faculty of the programme along with relevant evidence provided confirmed to the Panel that at the end of each year, the College Council reviews the admission criteria and makes necessary adjustments to them where necessary, in light of students' outcomes, stakeholders' feedback, and benchmarking results.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

There are clear procedures for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and professional development of academic staff, which ensure that staff members are fit-for-purpose and that help in staff retention.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The Institution has a clear Human Resource Manual of policies and procedures and an Employee Handbook as well as an Induction Policy and Procedure that collectively help ensure fair recruitments of employees and protect their rights, while also clarifying what is expected of them in terms of codes of conduct. Interviews with faculty confirmed that there are clear and equal-opportunity recruitment procedures in place and that, upon appointment, they were inducted well at different levels (university, college, and department) and familiarised with what is stipulated in the main policies pertinent to their needs, such as the performance appraisal policy, staff development, and academic promotion policies and procedures.

- The Panel reviewed a sample of filled performance appraisal forms and noticed in the evaluation the reliance on several performance indicators and areas of self-improvement for future development, rated by both the faculty members themselves (as self-evaluation) and by their Department Chair, with comments and notes provided by the Chair. Student evaluation and class observation results are also calculated in the appraisal score for each faculty member. Interviews with academic staff confirmed to the Panel clear awareness of the appraisal criteria and procedures as well as a general level of satisfaction toward them.

- The appraisal results are incorporated in the promotion process at KU, where the procedures for applying for academic promotion are clear, well-defined, and transparent.

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However, although nine faculty members from the University were promoted between 2014-2022, only one of them was from the BID programme and he was promoted from assistant to associate professor in 2014. The Panel, thus, recommends that the College should provide greater support where needed to assist faculty members with their career progression through academic promotion.

- At the time of the virtual visit, there was a total of 10 full-time faculty members in the College serving the programme, out of which four belonged to the Department of Interior Design. Only one of the four was an Associate Professor and two were Assistant Professors, and one Lecturer. Additionally, there were other faculty members serving the programme, some of which on a part-time basis, teaching the general courses. The Panel noticed that the faculty members in the College vary in professional experience in terms of teaching and practice in the field and many of them hold professional certificates (e.g., in Revit, 3D Max, and Maya). Also, most of them hold a United Kingdom Higher Education Academy fellowship, which denotes their professional practice in teaching and learning. The Panel is of the view, thus, that the faculty members teaching on the programme are appropriate in terms of number, range of academic qualifications, specialisations and professional experience.

- The University has a clear research policy and procedures that contribute to ensuring a quality research culture. Additionally, at the College level, there is good annual research planning that aligns research objectives with the college vision and mission. The research priorities set out by the College are aligned with its programmes' aims and visions, which the Panel found to be well-reflected in the good amount of research studies published by KU faculty in high-ranked journals and in their varied involvements in local and international conferences.

- The faculty members' engagements in research at KU along with their assigned workload is documented in their weekly timetable, as was observed during the campus tour visit and through conversations with the faculty during the virtual interviews. The timetables indicate clear adherence to HEC regulations in the allocation of teaching loads and consistency with the faculty workload allocation policy specified in the Faculty Handbook. In addition, female faculty members' special needs are taken into consideration when allocating workload or assigning special tasks or projects, as was confirmed during interviews with the faculty.

- With respect to capacity building opportunities for staff, these are handled by a special unit in the University known as the Staff Development Unit (SDU), which plans and monitors effective arrangements for faculty professional development and analyses their impact *via* specific evaluation forms designed for that purpose. Ample evidence of staff professional development activities and engagements was provided to the Panel through the university's Staff Development Plan for 2021-2022 and the activities' feedback forms

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and analyses. The Panel appreciates the notable level of support in terms of capacity building opportunities provided to the faculty and staff by the College and the University. In relation to this, Table 2.7 in the SER displaying the number of years faculty members of the CAED have been rendering services at the University, reports an average length of service of 5.25 years and a maximum of 14 years, which indicates a high retention rate, that KU regularly monitors and measures and is keen on maintaining. In addition to the professional development opportunities, several incentives are in place to limit staff turnover, which were mentioned both in the SER and in interviews, such as support for research activities, and encouragement of faculty to take on administrative positions with additional allowance advantages.

Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources

Physical and material resources are adequate in number, space, style and equipment; these include classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories and other study spaces; Information Technology facilities, library and learning resources.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- During the tour of KU's campus, the Panel found the number and size of the classrooms and laboratories to be adequate for supporting the programme's activities. The tour also confirmed the availability of an adequate laboratory and studio setup, with appropriate and advanced design teaching tools and machinery, as demonstrated in the video provided by KU as evidence. Specifically, the Panel acknowledges the special setup and tools for online studios. As for the classrooms, the Panel notes with appreciation the convenient and flexible setup in some of them using 22 movable partitions that allow ample space for the display of student work during juries.

- The Panel notes general adherence of the facilities to the relevant safety measures and procedures. Nevertheless, the Panel noticed that while the Experimental Manual requires an escape plan and assembly point locations in case of fire, this was not clearly indicated during the campus tour. Additionally, the area around the safety showers in the laboratory was not cleared enough. The Panel, thus, recommends that the College should enhance the health and safety measures while students are in the laboratories, as per the guidelines spelled out in the Experimental Manual.

- The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities and resources that serve the programme were examined during the campus tour and also *via* the related demo provided during the virtual visit, and were found to be sufficient and adequate, with varied hardware, software, digital media, and communication and management systems being used, each for its own purpose, to support end users' needs whether faculty or students alike. For example, it was noticed that there is heavy reliance in the Department

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and College on an active Student Information System (SIS), Management Information System (MIS), a Learning management System (LMS) *via* Moodle, MS Teams, SharePoint, and an active IT helpdesk. Also, as mentioned in the SER, faculty and students have access to Office 365 suite with its main applications, a stable WIFI network, and the latest design modelling and rendering software.

- The University has in place a Library Management Policy through which the university library is guided in its main functions of acquisition, library membership, circulation, course reserves and stock of library collection. While the campus tour revealed that the physical library collection is relatively small in books and average in periodicals and references, the University benefits from a large electronic database to which the students and staff have direct access. Through interviews with library staff, the Panel concluded that proper induction of the library services is provided to faculty and new students by the librarian upon request. Considering the size of the College, the Panel finds this type of provision reasonable; however, the Panel advises that the library organize on a regular basis systematic and well-planned induction sessions for all its new users.

- In terms of maintenance of resources and facilities, KU provided evidence of outsourced maintenance companies, which conduct regular maintenance checks on, for example, the fire alarm system, air conditioners, elevators, and the like. An in-house technician is also available permanently on campus to perform maintenance tasks as needed. Interviews with faculty and students during the virtual visit confirmed their satisfaction with the maintenance services provided in the University.

- KU has appropriate arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students and staff on campus, which are guided by the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Procedure and the safety Manual. Health and safety on campus are supported mainly by a group of OHS officers, fire marshals, and a clinic with a full-time licensed nurse. The clinic was visited during the campus tour and found to have appropriate arrangements and equipment in place for minor to medium emergencies.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

There are functioning management information and tracking systems that support the decision-making processes and evaluate the utilisation of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, along with policies and procedures that ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- There is an appropriate MIS that connects several administrative tasks together. The system gathers, sorts and organizes data to be processed and to generate reports linked to the SIS, as stated in the SER and demonstrated during the ICT demo during the virtual

visit. Additionally, this system, as was demonstrated during the demo, uses an integrated algorithm within Moodle to track students' grades and CILOs' achievement, generate needed CILOs-PILOs mapping reports, and create the course portfolios within simple clicks. This allows and secures proper documentation of course content and saves a lot of administrative work and time for the faculty involved in the programme and is, consequently, considered by the Panel to be a good practice for other institutions to follow. Thus, the Panel notes with appreciation the original integration of the MIS with the LMS, which is generating critical reports, such as the ILOs' achievement reports, and data in the form of course portfolios, that can be used in important decision-making processes at the level of the programme. Moreover, KU utilizes other data management and tracking systems such as LABSTAT, which helps track the utilisation of its various resources, including e-resources, and supports the management's related decision-making processes.

- Learners' records and accuracy of results are maintained through a robust process of safe storage and monitoring, in adherence with the Record and Retention and Disposal Policy as well as other related policies that ensure the security of learners' records and archiving procedures. Physical and digital records are retained, encrypted and backed up regularly using a secure access to the SIS system. Local and remote servers are used for this process, as was observed during the campus tour and confirmed through the virtual interviews with the ICT staff. Furthermore, KU has in place a Certification Policy and Procedure aligned with HEC guidelines, through which the accuracy and authenticity of the certificates and transcripts it issues are verified and assured, and which ensures their issuance in a timely manner. The certification issuance process can take around two months in total depending on the HEC approval and is, in general, an easy process, as was confirmed by the BID alumni during interviews.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

There is appropriate student support available in terms of guidance, and care for students including students with special needs, newly admitted and transferred students, and students at risk of academic failure.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- KU provides a variety of support services from which the students of the BID programme benefit. To begin with, the facilities available for the students such as the library, laboratories, and workshops are well-equipped with professional and dedicated staff members. In the library, the staff organize information literacy sessions for the students as needed and in the computer laboratories, there are two technicians and two ICT specialists to support the students with any difficulties they may face. ICT technicians are also available to help troubleshoot hardware, software, and WIFI connection problems outside of the computer laboratories, as they arise.

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- Students can benefit from mental health and wellbeing support through counselling services available at the University that are offered as per the Student Welfare, Support and Guidance Policy. Additionally, it was confirmed to the Panel through the SER and from interviews that appropriate arrangements are in place to integrate women's needs, including those of pregnant women or who have childcare commitments.

- Newly admitted into the programme, irrespective of whether they are entering directly or being transferred from another programme, are provided with an orientation programme, which is organised by the Student Affairs Department as per the Student Orientation Procedure. Information about the BID programme in specific is provided to the newly admitted students by the Department Chairperson. Interviews with students confirmed a general satisfaction with the induction processes provided at KU.

- Employability and career counselling are provided according to the Student Career Guidance Policy and Procedure. The Internship, Alumni Affairs and Career Guidance Unit (IAACGU) is officially in charge of providing this type of counselling, which it conducts through an Annual Activity Plan that gets submitted to the College Dean and which includes topics relevant to career awareness and guidance. Despite this planning, the Panel noticed that the topics covered by the IAACGU do not focus much, if at all, on the possible paths graduates of the BID programme can take. Also, there is no evidence which indicates that one-to-one career counselling is taking place with the BID students. The Panel, thus recommends, that the College should improve the career guidance it provides the BID students with, to make it more focused and relevant to their prospective field of work and possible career paths.

- In terms of academic advising, this is guided by the detailed Student Academic Advising Policy and Procedure. Interviews with faculty revealed that student advising helps monitor and ensure the academic progression of students and identify those at-risk of academic failure. The information systems available at the University, the LMS and the SIS, also help with the identification of such students. All support provided to at-risk students is planned for and executed according to the Student Academically at-risk Policy and Procedure. Therefore, each student is allocated an academic advisor.

- Support services at KU, are regularly evaluated through student satisfaction surveys, the analysis of which ultimately leads to relevant improvement planning. The Panel examined evidence in the form of a sample of a Student Satisfaction Survey Analysis Report and noticed a student satisfaction rate not exceeding 80% on every survey item related to academic support (e.g., academic advising and briefing on the requirements of the programme). The Panel, thus, advises the programme to investigate ways to increase students' satisfaction rates toward the some of the support services it provides. The Panel was also informed of a second mechanism through which services are evaluated and this

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is through feedback received from the student representatives, who serve as a vital channel of communication between the BID student body and the college officials.

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Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

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Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

The assessment is effective and aligned with learning outcomes, to ensure attainment of the graduate attributes and academic standards of the programme.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The programme uses a variety of formative and summative assessment methods. As indicated through the contents of the course portfolios and other provided evidence, the summative assessments in the programme are clearly documented and in line with good practices in terms of the level of assessments' complexity and meet the academic standards of the programme. This was further confirmed through the review of a sample of assessed students' projects, which demonstrated consistent assessment across the board and good design work on the part of the students. As for formative assessment, the course coordinators and faculty members confirmed during interviews that it is provided mostly in the design studio through tutorials, interim reviews, and pre-juries on students works.

- The assessment methods in the programme are selected depending on the ILOs. This is illustrated in the mappings between the assessment methods and the CILOs included in the course specifications, which are checked and validated by both the internal and the external moderators to ensure its accuracy, as was confirmed through interviews with all the relevant stakeholders (i.e., course coordinators, faculty, and external moderators). The documentation provided shows a clear alignment of the assessments with the learning outcomes. The course coordinators and faculty members confirmed that all questions on major examinations are mapped to the CILOs and the CILOs are already mapped to the PILOs and graduate attributes. Therefore, collective achievement of the CILOs through the assessment tools leads to the achievement of the PILOs and the graduate attributes mapped to them. Internal moderation and the CILOs and PILOs' achievement reports generated by the automated system through the LMS help verify and confirm that the student outcomes are being met. Indirectly, also, the PILOs are assessed through the surveys completed in the programme by the internship supervisors, alumni, and employers, which help confirm whether the knowledge and skills of students reflected in their achievements are at the level of the expected PILOs.

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- As confirmed by the course coordinators and faculty members, at the end of each semester, the students are invited to participate in a survey to provide feedback on the assessments and on the teaching and learning quality. The results of the survey are analysed and actions for improvement are taken as necessary. In interviews, the students acknowledged the clarity of the assessments and the good communication of them. Additionally, each instructor prepares a CILOs achievement report which includes improvements needed in the course. These reports are reviewed by the concerned committees for implementation and monitoring. Finally, the Department has a robust internal and external moderation mechanism to ensure the adequateness of the assessment, its consistent implementation and its improvement. However, the Panel notes that the implementation of internships in the programme is not fully moderated and this was confirmed through interviews with Senior Management. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should widen the scope of moderation to cover the internship component like any other course in the programme.

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is ensured through the consistent implementation of relevant policies and procedures that deter plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work).

Judgement: *Addressed*

- There is clear evidence of policies and procedures in relation to academic integrity. This evidence is represented in the Plagiarism Policy and Procedure, Research Policy and Procedure, Employee Handbook, and Student Handbook. Students are introduced to these policies during induction. Also, the evidence shows that the Department provides awareness sessions on ethics of conducting research and design projects to students enrolled in the 'Design Research Methods' (AED251) course and the two final graduation courses 'Interior Design Graduation Project I' (IDES412) and 'Interior Design Graduation Project II' (IDES413). Furthermore, the evidence demonstrates sound implementation of the plagiarism policy and procedure through the verification of students' written assignments *via* the Turnitin plagiarism-detection software.

- In the case of academic misconduct cases, the University has in place a Misconduct Committee to deal with them based on clear policies and procedures mirroring those of the University of Bahrain. The evidence shows that, in practice, academic misconduct by students is consistently dealt with in adherence to the Student Code of Conduct and the Anti-Bullying, Discrimination, and Harassment Policy. Misconduct cases are well-recorded and well-documented in the College. During the Panel's meeting with the chairs of committees serving the programme, it was confirmed that in the academic year 2021-2022, the College dealt with two misconduct cases from another academic programme, as

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no such incidents have taken place in the BID programme, and in both cases a failing grade was awarded.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- There are robust formal assessment and moderation procedures and policies in place. As stated in the SER, the programme relies on internal and external moderators to evaluate and ensure the standards of the assessments. Internally, with the exception of the post-moderation of final examinations, which is conducted by the University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (UC-TLAC), all internal moderation is overseen by the College Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (CC-TLAC). This committee designates an internal moderator to review, based on certain criteria, the relevance and alignment of the assessments to be moderated (pre-moderation) and check the assessment results after the assessments are completed (post-moderation).

- Internal moderators must have sufficient expertise in the related subject area and complete special forms designed for moderation purpose when reviewing assessments. The Panel reviewed a sample of completed internal moderation forms with instructors' corrections, in addition to reviewing evidence of internal moderation reports and their discussion in the CC-TLAC and UC-TLAC meetings and finds the process to be consistently implemented. The Panel also notes appropriate mechanisms for evaluating the internal moderation processes, in the form of moderation reports prepared by the CC-TLAC and submitted for discussion in the College Council.

- A somewhat similar moderation process applies for external moderation with slight variations. Again, the CC-TLAC plays a central administrative role to facilitate external pre-moderation of final examinations and post-moderation of entire course assessments and portfolios. The CC-TLAC is supported by the Department Chairperson, who according to the University Moderation Procedure, is the main party responsible for external post-moderation.

- External moderators, who normally serve three-year appointments, must be experienced academics from local, regional, and international institutions. They are selected by the Department Chairperson and approved by the College Council. Once done with their moderation tasks, external moderators present reports that are used by the CC-TLAC to prepare improvement plans with actions for forthcoming semesters, that require approval from the College Council. Implementation of the approved plans is then overseen by the College Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (CC-QAEC) and the AQAC,

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which ensure monitoring with semestrial reportage from the CC-TLAC on implementation progress. This altogether helps ensure continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the external moderation process.

- In interviews, the moderators confirmed that following the submission of their moderation reports, they always receive feedback from the Department Chairperson about how the Department plans to address their comments. In result, the Panel finds the overall moderation process in the programme to be clear and transparent. The Panel is also of the view that internal and external moderation explicitly influences and guides the setting of assessment and the fairness and appropriateness of marking. It is also an effective process for objective and expert alignment of assessment in the programme with international educational standards and professionalism. The Panel, thus, appreciates the robust internal and external moderation processes in place and the effective role they have in improving the programme's assessments.

Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning

Where assessed work-based learning takes place, there is a policy and procedures to manage the process and its assessment, to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level for meeting the intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The University has an established Internship Policy and Procedure, including a Student's Career Guidance Procedure, which help ensure an equivalent experience amongst all students undertaking work-based learning. At the department level, there is a committee that oversees all matters related to internship. There are two internship courses in the programme which are 'Internship I' (IDES251) and 'Internship II' (IDES351), and both are compulsory. The first is a one-credit course consisting of 100 hours of work-based learning and can be taken only after the completion of 56 credits of the study plan. The second is a two-credit course consisting of 200-hours and can be taken after the completion of 100 credit-hours.

- The course specifications of the two internship courses clearly define the objectives of the internship, the learning outcomes, the assessment methods and criteria and the responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders, including the internship providers, academic supervisors, training supervisors and students. In the specifications, the CILOs of the internship are mapped to the PILOs, focusing on development and demonstration of knowledge and understanding of industry-specific skills, critical thinking and transferable skills as relevant to professional practice in industry. The Panel is of the view that the CILOs are appropriate for effective intended work-based learning in an industry context (i.e., internship).

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- The students reported during their interview that they have the freedom to choose the internship provider if they are able to secure one; otherwise, the College finds the provider for them through the work of the IAACGU whose responsibility is to liaise with training providers in the field of interior design, to obtain initial acceptance for placement of a certain number of students according to available training places. The students also reported that they are well informed about all procedures related to the internship and that the academic and field supervisors communicate with them at different stages of the internship process to explain to them the exact tasks expected of them, and this was also confirmed through evidence provided to the Panel. This is in addition to preparing an explicit training plan for them to guide them in what needs to be done. The training plan includes the tasks that will contribute to the achievement of the training objective and the ILOs. The Panel examined samples of students' training plans and found them to be clear and sufficiently detailed.

- The assessment of student internships is conducted by both the academic supervisor and the field supervisor *via* specific tasks that are required by the student interns, followed with the submission of four reports each over the course of their training period. These reports are evaluated by the academic supervisor and weigh a total of 20% of the cumulative internship assessment grade, which also includes another 20% for the student's final presentation that is evaluated by an assessment panel; 10% for observations carried by the academic supervisor during their visits to the intern in the field; 30% for the field supervisor's evaluation; and 20% for the training report that the student submits after completion of the whole internship course. The Panel reviewed a sample of students' internship reports but was not able to evaluate them accurately in terms of level and standard, as they were mainly a collection of illustrations. Also, when reviewing the sample of industrial training/field supervisor's evaluation forms submitted as evidence, the Panel noticed that they could have included more constructive comments in them. The Panel thus recommends that the College should enforce more stringent requirements in relation to the content of students' internship reports, that would help in providing a clearer reflection of their acquired knowledge and skills. Also, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that students' field supervision is being implemented with more consistent progression monitoring, to better support the interns with their achievement of the related learning outcomes.

- Several mechanisms are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship component in the programme such as surveys to collect feedback from industry/field supervisors and from student interns. Through all these surveys, respondents can provide written feedback based on their internship experience whether as supervisors or interns and make recommendations for improvement of the course. The programme also relies on feedback from the college Industrial Advisory Council (IACL) members, who in the interview with the Panel confirmed that they had previously made recommendations on the work-based

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learning with regards to hours, topics, rules, regulations, and fees, to which the programme responded positively with changes.

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

Where there is a capstone project or thesis/dissertation component, there are clear policies and procedures for supervision and evaluation which state the responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and students, and there is a mechanism to monitor the related implementations and improvements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The capstone course in the BID programme is the 'Interior Design Graduation Project II' (IDES413), which is mandatory for all its students and is the synthesis of all the learning outcomes of the programme. Providing the student with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to handle an interior design project from the stage of design brief development to that of the design solution, this course manages to contribute effectively to the student's holistic achievement of the PILOs, as demonstrated through the mappings of the course ILOs to the relevant PILOs included in the course specification.

- The Department has developed and implements a specific graduation project guidelines document, that helps guide the students through their projects' journey. These guidelines clearly specify the relevant roles and responsibilities of the supervisor, the student, and the Department Chairperson. Before initiating work on their projects, the students are made aware of these guidelines, and the Department Chairperson informs them through a special awareness session about the whole process, procedures, responsibilities of students and supervisors, and all assessment dates for critique sessions, pre-jury 01, pre-jury 02, and final jury. The Guidelines additionally cover the whole assessment process including the assessment criteria for the project.

- Assessment of the capstone course is comprehensively documented, where the assessment process is clearly delineated through all stages: pre-jury 1 and 2; progress critique; and final jury. Detailed assessment rubrics are also included for each of the four stages of assessment with related ILOs. The final jury assessment is undertaken by the academic supervisor, an internal assessor and an external assessor, by which both academic and industry standards are maintained. The Panel was provided with a group of graduation project design samples for some students and a sample of graduation project assessment forms and is of the view that mechanisms implemented for the assessment of the capstone project component of the programme are rigorous and help ensure its comparability in standards to equivalent programmes internationally.

- Throughout the process of working on their graduation projects up until completion, students are guided by way of continuous studio supervision. Regular and formal jury reviews, comprising supervisor, internal juror and external juror, allow students to present their designs at pre-determined stages of progress and to receive critical reviews and recommendations orally and in writing so that their designs may be improved prior to the final stage of the project. In addition to this regular monitoring and review of the students' progress while working on their graduation project, there is also monitoring conducted in relation to the implemented processes and improvements. This takes place through the work of the AQAC, which oversees and directs all improvement initiatives associated with the graduation project process, based on relevant stakeholders' feedback collected *via* surveys and other similar data-collection tools (e.g., course evaluations by students).

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

The achievements of the graduates are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes as expressed in their assessed work, rates of progression and first destinations.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The Panel reviewed samples of graded assignments included in the course portfolios and interviewed faculty, students, alumni, employers, and members of the college IACL, to learn about the level of students' achievements and, in result, arrived at the conclusion that the level overall is appropriate for the BID programme and is comparable with similar programmes locally, regionally, and internationally. Appropriateness of the achievements' level is further confirmed through the comprehensive mappings between the intended learning outcomes at different levels in the programme.

- With respect to achievement of the graduates in light of the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates including year-on-year progression, retention, and length of study, the Panel finds it difficult to issue a judgement on, due to the unique circumstances that the BID programme has been through. As, prior to 2020-2021 academic year, the programme's admission was interrupted for three years (2017-2018; 2018-2019; 2019-2020) due to the programme not meeting BQA requirements in its last review of 2015. After this interruption, the programme resumed accepting students in 2020, with only two students entering the programme, who clearly have not yet graduated and who, anyway, constitute a very low number, insignificant to indicate a clear pattern of progression or retention or to make relevant judgements about. However, looking at the cohort analysis from years prior to the admission interruption of 2017 presented in the SER, there is an indication of the student numbers and retention rates decreasing year after year. However, this is clearly expected with the adverse circumstances the programme was going through. Also, with the 2021-2022 intake, the programme has started with a new cohort of students, and

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is expecting better retention and progression rates, considering that the university's 'Student Support Unit' is now closely monitoring students' progress and assisting them with any problems they may have, which is something that the Panel views as positive and recommends that the College should sustain and support, to improve retention and progression rates.

- Despite the small number of students and thus graduates in the programme, the Panel notes from the employer's survey results and from the interviews a clear employers' satisfaction toward the BID graduates, whom they reported as being well-prepared to work in the industry. However, the results of the 2019-2020 alumni survey show that only three from a total of eight alumni work in their field of study and that 62% are either unemployed or working in a different field. The Panel thus recommends that the College should closely reflect on the employability of the BID graduates and develop a clear strategy with relevant mechanisms to improve its rates. This recommendation comes despite the fact that KU is currently maintaining and developing its collaboration with alumni in adherence to the Alumni Affairs Policy and Procedure and is enhancing its communication with them through its Institutional Assessment Unit (IAU) and supporting them through its Alumni Office in finding jobs.

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Standard 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.

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Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

There is a clear quality assurance management system, in relation to the programme that ensures the institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The BID programme is guided in all its functions and operations by a set of bylaws, strategic frameworks, and strategic plans at the institutional level, such as the University Bylaws, Strategic Academic Planning and Review Framework, Strategic Academic Plan 2017-2022, and the Annual Research Plan. This is in addition to a large set of policies and procedures that the programme abides by such as the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure, Assessment Policy and Procedure, Research Policy and Procedure, Internship Policy, and Registration, Enrolment and Academic Progress Policy and Procedure. These policies and procedures are regularly reviewed according to the Policy and Procedure Development Framework Policy and Procedure every three years, as was confirmed during interviews with the BID programme team. Interviews also referred, in general, to the clear system in place at KU for improving existing policies on the basis of internal and external audits and for ensuring clear communication of the policies to all stakeholders *via* multiple channels, such as SharePoint, the university website, and various handbooks and manuals.

- KU has a Quality Management System (QMS) in place through which all quality assurance matters are handled. This system is constituted of several structures in the form of a centre (the AQAC), units (the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Unit and the IAU), committees at the university and college level (e.g., CC-QAEC). The CC-QAEC is directly responsible for monitoring and overseeing the quality assurance and enhancement of the BID programme activities, which is guided and audited by the university AQAC and Strategic Planning and Governance Unit (SPAGU). The process of internal audit is the mechanism that verifies the implementation of the university policies and procedures to assure that they are consistently applied across the University. The auditing mechanism is well-organised and includes an audit checklist, pre-audit meetings, internal audit reports and improvement plans. The Panel reviewed a sample of minutes of meetings of different committees, among them the quality assurance committees, and concluded from

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them and from various interviews with the college faculty and staff that the QMS activities in relation to the programme are consistently implemented.

- All faculty and staff at KU have access to a specific online link *via* SharePoint through which they can be provided with all the university policies and procedures including those that guide them in their core functions of teaching, assessment, and research and outline for them their quality assurance-related roles and responsibilities. Additionally, KU uses the staff induction programme to inform academics and support staff alike of the latest quality assurance guidelines. During interviews, the Panel noticed a strong awareness and understanding on the part of the faculty and members of the various committees of their roles and responsibilities in the programme's quality assurance.

- The evidence provided and interviews revealed how the QMS is monitored, evaluated and improved at different levels. As mentioned above, at the College level, all quality provisions are monitored and evaluated through the work of the CC-QAEC, and then at the university level through the work of the AQAC, and all based on the relevant institutional quality assurance policies. Results of the monitoring and evaluation, with corresponding improvement decisions, are discussed and approved in the college and university councils.

Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership

The programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership and there are clear lines of accountability.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- KU's organisational chart demonstrates a well-defined management structure. According to the SER and as was confirmed in interviews, the College Dean, the Department Chairperson, course coordinators and department committees are responsible for the programme's management, with the Dean reporting to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research who reports to the University President. The Panel thus acknowledges that the management of the College, Department, and the BID programme is clear and well-describes the decision-making process and the flowlines of communication.

- The University has clear terms of reference for all University and College councils and committees. The academic responsibility and custodianship are clear and within a supportive framework involving upward and downward reporting across the University. The Dean, who chairs the College Council, holds the highest responsibility for the programme, while assisted in maintaining its academic standards by the Department

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Chairperson, course coordinators and different committees, who together take on a leading role in delivering and assessing the programme.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

There are arrangements for annual internal evaluation and periodic reviews of the programme that incorporate both internal and external feedback and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The University has policies and procedures specifically for the implementation of internal self-evaluations, according to which the programme has been subjected to several annual reviews, with corresponding self-evaluation reports being issued and relevant improvement plans being produced by the Department. The programme's annual self-evaluation reports are reflective and comprehensive documents including feedback gathered from all the relevant internal and external stakeholders. The AQAC is responsible for ensuring that the annual self-evaluations are implemented according to quality standards and that the recommendations resulting from them are being addressed and leading to improvements in the programme. Additionally, the self-evaluation reports are discussed in the different councils, for which minutes of meetings were presented to the Panel as evidence of the university's keenness to monitor effective implementation of the recommendations they entail.

- KU has a detailed policy to review the programme every five years. This review is managed by the College Programme Review and Development Committee, which ensures the comprehensiveness of the sources used to feed information into the review process, wherein both internal and external stakeholders' and expert feedback (including CIDA validators) is considered including benchmarking results and results of the annual internal audit conducted of the programme by the AQAC. Like the annual self-evaluation report, the periodic review report is discussed by the councils at different levels, and the review process is formally audited by the AQAC, through which it ensures that the resulting report, improvement plans, and progress report are accurate, and recommendations are followed up upon. The Panel appreciates the wide variety of experts (including CIDA verifiers) that review the programme.

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

Benchmarking studies and the structured comments collected from stakeholders' surveys are analysed and the outcomes are used to inform decisions on programmes and are made available to the stakeholders.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- In accordance with the Benchmarking Policy and Procedure and the Institutional Assessment Policy and Procedure, which help ensure comparability of academic standards that relate to interior design and guide the selection process of benchmarking institutions locally and internationally, an informal comprehensive benchmarking exercise was conducted of the BID programme against five local, three regional, and 20 international programmes. The benchmarking included the programme aims, number of credits, PILOs, domain weights, offered courses, and course descriptions. The Panel was presented with the benchmarking results in the form of a report and notes a high level of similarity between the benchmarked aspects of the programme and those of other universities. Interviews with the programme team and minutes of meetings of the different councils confirmed to the Panel that benchmarking results are regularly reflected in the decisions taken to improve and update the programme.

- There are clear and formal mechanisms in place, according to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy and the Institutional Assessment Policy, to collect constructive comments from internal and external stakeholders. These include student course evaluation surveys, student satisfaction surveys, ICT and Library User satisfaction surveys, and alumni and employers' surveys, the results of which are analysed by the IAU and discussed by the College Dean and Department Chairperson and used to draft related improvement plans. Interviews and evidence submitted confirmed the implementation of the improvement plans.

- The SER describes the robust mechanisms in place to implement improvements based on stakeholders' feedback and to communicate the related outcomes back to them, either *via* the Student Council when outcomes concern students, or *via* the SharePoint when they concern faculty and administrative staff, or *via* the IACL when they concern employers. During the site visit, different groups of stakeholders reported that they are sufficiently informed of changes made based on their feedback and confirmed that KU responds effectively to their suggestions, while also providing examples in support of this. For example, in response to a lack of student knowledge on building materials noticed by members of the college IACL, the library added to its collection more relevant resources. Also, in response to a few employers' suggestion, the programme worked on greater integration of design courses with materials and practice. Finally, the internship supervisors had at one point recommended that the internship hours be increased, and the programme proceeded with extending the internship period. In conclusion, the Panel finds that the programme's stakeholders are satisfied with changes implemented based on their feedback and appreciates the level of responsiveness to stakeholders' feedback exhibited by the BID programme when making informed decisions.

Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs

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The programme has a functioning advisory board and there is continuous scoping of the labour market and the national and societal needs, where appropriate for the programme type, to ensure the relevancy and currency of the programme.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The college's IACL serves as an active advisory board to the BID programme, which meets a minimum of twice per academic year and has clear terms of reference. In its composition, it includes members from the architecture and interior design field either as employers, experts, or alumni. However, considering that the IACL is at the college level and is supposed to equally support all the programmes within the College including the BID programme, the Panel noticed an imbalance in the number of professions represented in the IACL when it came to Interior Design members. The Panel thus recommends that the College should ensure that all the disciplines it covers are equally represented in its IACL. A review of a sample of minutes of meeting confirmed to the Panel that the IACL meets regularly and provides consistent feedback to the programme, which is clearly communicated to the programme decision makers and systematically translated into improvements plans that help with the BID programme development, thus ensuring its relevance and currency.

- KU conducts several surveys that enable scoping the labour market and the national needs to check consistency with the programme's provision, such as the Alumni Survey, Employers and Potential Employers Survey. The data gathered from the surveys is well-documented in relevant analysis reports. However, the Panel noticed from the Employers and Potential Employers' survey of February-April 2020 that despite the high satisfaction level with graduates' skills in the interior design field and its social effect and the high level of trust in having KU graduates placed in a design profession, the survey was administered for both the architectural engineering and the interior design programmes and, thus, its results are not clearly representative of the BID graduates alone and it is therefore difficult to discern which findings apply to them and which to those of the Architectural Engineering programme. The Panel thus recommends that the College should administer separate employers' surveys for its different programmes, to enable more accurate conclusions about the extent to which each programme's graduates' skills match the specific labour market requirements of their profession.

- From a market research perspective, KU relies on the Gulf Cooperative Council Interior Design Services Market Report (2022-2027), which includes a chapter on Bahrain, to align the BID programme to current market trends as well as national and societal needs. This applied mechanism is current and reflects how the industry and the programme can be effective post COVID-19 pandemic. To support employability, the Panel was informed during interviews that KU considers the employer-led skills requirements and graduates' skills analysis for the Kingdom of Bahrain published by the HEC in 2014. However,

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despite this, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct formal local market research studies, to understand more thoroughly the gaps existing in the Bahraini interior design market and its related employability needs, as the situation differs from what can be found in regional market studies.

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V. Conclusion

> **Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the virtual site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020*:**
>
> **There is Confidence in the Bachelor in Interior Design of the College of Architectural Engineering and Design offered by Kingdom University.**

In coming to its conclusion regarding the four Standards, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

1. The notable level of support in terms of capacity building opportunities provided to the faculty and staff by the College and the University.
2. The convenient and flexible setup in some classrooms, using 22 movable partitions that allow ample space for the display of student work during juries.
3. The original integration of the Management Information System with the Learning Management System, which generates critical reports, such as the Intended Learning Outcomes' achievement reports, and data in the form of course portfolios, that can be used in important decision-making processes at the level of the programme.
4. The robust internal and external moderation processes in place and the effective role they have in improving the programme's assessments.
5. The wide variety of experts (including CIDA verifiers) that review the programme
6. The level of responsiveness to stakeholders' feedback exhibited by the Bachelor in Interior Design programme when making informed decisions.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the College of Architectural Engineering and Design at Kingdom University should:

1. Consider revising the Bachelor in Interior Design curriculum to reduce the number of courses per semester, so as to allow better focus by students on their specific courses and to conserve resources.
2. Seriously consider revising its admission criteria, to make the cumulative high school average requirement higher than 60%.
3. Provide greater support where needed to assist faculty members with their career progression through academic promotion.

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4. Enhance the health and safety measures while students are in the labs, as per the guidelines spelled out in the Experimental Manual.

5. Improve the career guidance provided to the Bachelor in Interior Design students, to make it more focused and relevant to their prospective field of work and possible career paths.

6. Widen the scope of moderation to cover the internship component like any other course in the programme.

7. Enforce more stringent requirements in relation to the content of students' internship reports, that would help in providing a clearer reflection of their acquired knowledge and skills.

8. Ensure that students' field supervision is being implemented with more consistent progression monitoring, to better support the interns with their achievement of the related learning outcomes.

9. Sustain and support the 'Student Support Unit' in closely monitoring students' progress and assisting them with any problems they may have, to improve retention and progression rates.

10. Closely reflect on the employability of the Bachelor in Interior Design graduates and develop a clear strategy with relevant mechanisms to improve its rates.

11. Ensure that all the disciplines covered in the College are equally represented in its Industrial Advisory Council.

12. Administer separate employers' surveys for its different programmes, to enable more accurate conclusions about the extent to which each programme's graduates' skills match the specific labour market requirements of their profession.

13. Conduct formal local market research studies, to understand more thoroughly the gaps existing in the Bahraini interior design market and its related employability needs, as the situation differs from what can be found in regional market studies.

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