



**هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب**  
**Education & Training Quality Authority**  
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN مملكة البحرين

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report**

**Royal University for Women  
College of Art and Design  
Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 5 – 7 December 2022**

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**HA116-C3-R116**

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## Acronyms

APR	Academic Programme Reviews
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CAC	College Advisory Committee
CAD	College of Art & Design
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DMS	Document Management System
FYP	Final Year Project
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
GRD	Graphic Design
IT	Information Technology
LMS	Learning Management System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OR	Office of the Registrar
OSL	Office of Student Life
PD	Professional Development
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAAU	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit
QA&E	Quality Assurance & Enhancement
RUW	Royal University for Women
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System
T&L	Teaching & Learning
WVU	West Virginia University

## 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 forms 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 <b>Standard 1</b> is not satisfied	

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.

## II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Royal University for Women
College/ Department*	College of Art and Design/ Department of Design
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design
Qualification Approval Number	Higher Education Council Letter No. (77-2008 / أ-ت-م) on 24 July 2008
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from the date of re-validation
Number of Units*	42
NQF Credit	645
Programme Aims*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enable students to develop their qualities and skills relevant for immediate employment in graphic design and advertising.</li> <li>• Equip students with the knowledge and understanding of techniques and developments related to a career in graphic design and advertising.</li> <li>• Prepare students for a variety of careers in research and teaching (Master and Doctoral Degree).</li> <li>• Enable students to contribute to the development of their countries by enhancing the visual language of graphic design (locally/ globally).</li> </ul>
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	<p><b><u>A. Knowledge and Understanding</u></b></p> <p><b>A1.</b> Recognise graphic design as an interdisciplinary scientific field.</p> <p><b>A2.</b> Identify graphic design as a "sign" of its time and place, which is based on different dimensions (such as cultural etc.).</p> <p><b>A3.</b> Comprehend and implement design research, history, strategies, and methodologies.</p> <p><b>A4.</b> Define and categorise results of other disciplines in order to use its data in solving graphic design problems.</p>

	<p><b><u>B. Subject-specific skills</u></b></p> <p><b>B1.</b> Combine applications of different media in one design concept professionally.</p> <p><b>B2.</b> Visualise aimed "added values" that is stated in the design brief or self-initiated concept clearly.</p> <p><b>B3.</b> Demonstrate ability in using different information, materials, and techniques effectively.</p> <p><b>B4.</b> Apply scientific principles (from semiotics or hermeneutics) in graphic design strategies and actions.</p> <p><b><u>C. Critical Thinking Skills</u></b></p> <p><b>C1.</b> Able to analyse and evaluate data from different resources sufficiently.</p> <p><b>C2.</b> Create concepts and innovative ideas for a variety of visual communication messages / projects.</p> <p><b>C3.</b> Capable in finding the most comprehensive and effective strategies for solving design problem.</p> <p><b>C4.</b> Articulate critical awareness and reasoned arguments for the quality of self-designed artwork.</p> <p><b><u>D. General and Transferrable Skills</u></b></p> <p><b>D1.</b> Develop skills in anticipating the future in art and design.</p> <p><b>D2.</b> Reflect ability in planning and managing graphic design projects successfully.</p> <p><b>D3.</b> Demonstrate efficiency in team working and self-promoting.</p> <p><b>D4.</b> Apply entrepreneurial thinking when working in unfamiliar and new projects of graphic design.</p>
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\* Mandatory fields

### III. Judgement Summary

#### The Programme's Judgement: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>The Learning Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Efficiency of the Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Addressed
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Academic Standards of Students and Graduates</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Addressed



Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Addressed
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Addressed
<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Addressed

## 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**

- The Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design (GRD) offered by the Royal University for Women (RUW) is guided by the standards of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the regulations of the Higher Education Council (HEC) of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The delivery of the programme is determined at both University and College Levels in relation to the RUW Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and the newly developed RUW Strategic Plan 2022-2027). The College of Art and Design (CAD) Operational Plan 2022-2023, Programme Approval and Modification Policy, and RUW Curriculum Review Process indicate the review and improvement practices at the College and programme levels, where the GRD programme is subject to scrutiny considering internal and external stakeholders' feedback.
- At the College level, the CAD Risk Management Plan indicates a scoping of internal and external risks, and how management or monitoring activities can be carried out. These risks include human resources, teaching and learning, Information Technology (IT), pandemics, and low demand for the programmes. The Panel notes that since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been strategic development to address the need for dynamic change, including the move to online teaching, and establishing dedicated committees to monitor the teaching and health and safety arrangements. Furthermore, the RUW Disaster Recovery Policy was developed to recognise and mitigate critical IT disruption. However, the Panel is of the view that potential risks, especially those related to the quality of the programme and academic standards are not sufficiently covered. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should identify a wider range of risk areas related to the quality of the programme and academic standards and effectively deal with these risks.

- The qualification's type and content are clearly reflected in the programme title, which is concise and accurately stated in the certificates, transcripts, and in all relevant documentation, including the Curriculum Plan 2021-2022, GRD Programme Specification, the Programme Handbook, and RUW Students Handbook, as well as on the university's website. Furthermore, the GRD programme was placed on the NQF Register in January 2020, hence, it adheres to the NQF qualification design requirements.
- The GRD Programme Specification identifies four programme aims that are aligned with the university and CAD's missions and goals. The programme aims are regularly revised considering the College Advisory Committee (CAC) members' feedback.

### **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: *Partially Addressed***

- The RUW Employability Strategy presents a set of generic graduate attributes identified at the institutional level which are embedded within the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) of the GRD programme. Additionally, CAD employs several tools to that the generic graduate attributes are embedded in the programme, such as RUW Student Experience Strategy and Pearson's Career Readiness Programme, which support students in the development and achievement of the graduate attributes.
- The GRD PILOs are listed in the GRD Programme Specification document and are categorised into four areas: Knowledge and Understanding, Subject-Specific Skills, Critical Thinking Skills, and General and Transferable Skills, which are also aligned with the programme aims. The Panel finds that the PILOs are appropriate in terms of the NQF Level.
- The provided samples of Course Specifications include the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), which demonstrate relevancy and appropriateness for the course level, contents and NQF Level and Credits. The submitted GRD Curriculum Review Framework dated July 2017 include a range of changes and developments based on the feedback received from the CAC, alumnae and employers' surveys, and benchmarking with other universities.
- The GRD Programme Specification illustrates the mapping of courses against the PILOs. The Panel was presented with the CILO to PILO Mapping template, which was recently developed by the Quality Assurance Unit, and learned during the site visit that this template is planned to be utilised in the next academic year. The Panel is concerned that

not having the completed mapping of CILOs to PILOs would negatively affect the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should expedite the completion of mapping all the courses CILOs to the relevant PILOs and the inclusion of this mapping in the individual course specification documents.

### **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**

- The GRD Curriculum Plan 2021-2022 demonstrates that curriculum content is organised to reflect subject-specific progression, with sequencing of courses reflecting NQF levels. The Panel finds that the programme structure is well-rationalised and support the progression over the four years of study from foundation knowledge and skills towards core programme competencies within a suitable student workload.
- The GRD curriculum is composed of courses that support the balance of theory and practice, and knowledge and skills. Higher-level skills, such as evaluation, analysis and critical thinking are apparent in courses, which are designed to synthesise skills, knowledge and experiences. For example, the 'Graphic Design III: 3D Graphics' (GRD363) course requires students to show their aptitude for problem-solving, conceptual and creative thinking and professional application of outcomes in response to externally defined Graphic Design challenges. Moreover, the Panel noticed that GRD courses' contents meet the expected depth and breadth while reviewing the course portfolios and samples of students work. The Panel also noticed that there is a reflection of academic staff expertise informing the curriculum, and that the courses contents are appropriate for each level/year of study.
- The recent CAD Improvement Plan shows that there is an ongoing process of revising the GRD programme, mainly based on the results of the external review conducted by West Virginia University (WVU). However, the Panel recognised and confirmed during the site visit that RUW is lacking the practice of regularly conducting curriculum benchmarking with other similar programmes and professional standards (see Indicator 4.4).
- The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) refers to CAD's role in ensuring that the GRD programme meets the HEC requirements in terms of providing appropriate books and learning resources. The Panel examined the Course Specifications which include the required reading lists covering books and journals that suitably serve the purpose of the courses offered. Moreover, the submitted List of CAD Books and Databases provides

evidence of RUW's library subscription to leading databases, which includes updated research and information of current Graphic Design practices.

#### **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 programme's approaches to teaching and learning are framed by the RUW Teaching & Learning Policy, which outlines a range of commitments that guide teaching and learning practices across the CAD programmes. Furthermore, the University has developed the RUW E-Learning Policy in response to the changes necessitated by COVID-19 which has been echoed on the course levels, as also confirmed by the academic staff during the interviews. The latter policy highlights and defines the various modes of delivery, where students are provided with a range of e-learning methods to learn and interact with instructors and colleagues through educational video conferences, interactive webinars, chat-based online discussions, among others.
- The abovementioned policies are reflected in the GRD Programme Specification as well as the Course Specifications where appropriate range of teaching and learning methods are aligned with each of the four categories of the PILOs. The Panel finds clear mapping and application of relevant teaching and learning methods and strategies for engaging students at differing levels of experience and a commitment to students' independent learning skills.
- The Panel notes that RUW has been effective in managing and supporting academic staff to enhance their online teaching skills during the COVID-19 pandemic, through engaging in Professional Development (PD) workshops and participating in programmes leading to recognised certificates, such as Pearson's Leaders of Learning programme and West Virginia Fall Hybrid Programme. Furthermore, to monitor the online delivery process, RUW has conducted an online teaching effectiveness survey and CAD has produced weekly reports. The submitted samples of the Online Teaching Effectiveness Survey Findings Report and CAD Online Teaching Weekly Report identify actions that would further enhance the online teaching, learning and assessment activities, considering students' feedback.
- The Panel notes that the students are engaged in different research and practical activities, which strengthen their research capabilities, motivate them to create and innovate, and develop an independent and lifelong learning environment. This was clear to the Panel from a range of courses, especially through 'Final Year Project I: Research and Concept' (GRD498), which exposes students to professional practice and application of theory. This

was confirmed during the interviews with academic staff, students, and alumnae. The development of students' independent learning has also been supported by the introduction of the 'Internship' (DES399) course. Furthermore, the interviewed alumnae gave very strong examples of how students' independence has been cultivated during the period of study, which is then translated into a successful career after graduation.

- The Panel recognises the efforts by RUW to provide and promote wide and efficient range of learning modes in and outside the university campus in collaboration with its partners from both public and private sectors. For example, the students have been provided with opportunities to participate in considerable range of events and exhibitions, such as Art Bahrain, Congress Entrepreneur Conference - Bahrain 2019 (sponsored by Global Entrepreneurship Network and Tamkeen), and INJAZ Young Entrepreneurship Competitions. This is in addition to the end of the year RUW Annual Art and Design Exhibition 'Tasameen'. The Panel appreciates the RUW initiatives to support the development of student's experience, critical understanding, and learning within community and professional context.

#### **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 assessment process at RUW is guided by a well-defined Assessment Policy, which is based on the Guidelines for Governance & Quality Management. From the policy, the Panel was able to identify how assessment is being applied within the programme, in terms of assessment design, pre- and post-moderation, marking criteria, and feedback provision. According to the policy as well as the submitted Course Portfolios, formative and summative assessment methods are applied in the GRD programme. The Panel was also provided with a range of examples where marking rubrics have been developed to reflect a variety of assessment methods, including generic and assessment specific marking criteria, which cover presentations, essays, report writing and class participation.
- From the evidence as well as during the interviews, the Panel was able to confirm that the programme staff are well informed about the Assessment Policy and relevant procedures through the Document Management System (DMS), where all the university's policies and procedures are uploaded. Furthermore, the GRD Programme Specification and Courses Specifications, which are provided to the students, refer to the assessment methods, which students can access through the Learning Management System (LMS) Moodle, as confirmed during the LMS demonstration session in the virtual site visit.

- Feedback to students is given *via* the LMS. The discussions with external stakeholders during the interviews demonstrated an awareness of the role and purpose of feedback as part of the assessment process and in terms of students' development of work. Moreover, both students and alumnae commented positively on the range of opportunities for feedback and the availability of academic staff to support their progress in the programme. However, the Panel noticed from the sample of feedback provided on Moodle that feedback can be further enhanced to show where performance is high and where improvements could be made. Thus, the Panel suggests that the College enhance the feedback to students to be detailed, especially on formative assessment.
- The RUW Assessment Policy states that all students' achievements undergo transparent grading, moderation, and reviewing mechanism to ensure fairness and rigour. Moreover, and as mentioned above, CAD applies generic rubrics and model answers as criteria for grading students' work. The Panel was able to review some samples of graded students' work, within the submitted Course Portfolios, according to rubrics, which are subjected to internal and external moderation processes to ensure fairness.
- The RUW Plagiarism Policy indicates how plagiarism and academic misconduct cases are identified and dealt with, including cheating, misuse of confidential material and misinterpretation of facts. The RUW Student Handbook and Plagiarism Awareness Handbook documents are communicated to students to ensure that they are aware of such academic offenses and consequences at the University. Evidence also indicated the use of the plagiarism-detection software (Turnitin) to check the authenticity of students' work. During the site visit, the Panel learned that since the pandemic, RUW also used a range of web-based applications to detect visual plagiarism.
- With regards to the students' right to appeal against assessment results, the Student Grade Appeal Policy clarifies the relevant arrangements and procedures for the appeal process, where a Grade Appeal Committee is formed to process any appeal case and take the necessary decisions in accordance with the policy. Moreover, the RUW Student Handbook covers the required information for students to be aware of their rights. The Panel was provided with a sample of an internal memorandum showing the decisions taken by CAD regarding cases of grade appeal.

## 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

- Admission requirements for CAD programmes are communicated and disseminated to all stakeholders *via* RUW's website as well as the RUW Student Handbook. There are specific requirements for each programme, which are outlined in the Procedure for Admissions. The admission for the GRD programme is open to applicants based on successful completion of secondary school education or its equivalent, evidence of English language proficiency and attending an interview. In case the English proficiency requirement is not provided, the applicant should do the RUW English Placement Test. Applicants who fail to record the placement test score 5.5 are required to complete the English for Academic Success programme for one or two semesters according to their performance in the placement test to improve their linguistic skills. The Panel is satisfied with the admission requirements and notes that there are appropriate policies and procedures with regards to progression, and internal and external credit transfer, articulated in the Access, Transfer and Progression Policy.
- As per the SER, admission requirements are regularly reviewed as part of the annual review of the RUW Student Handbook. The SER refers to an in-depth stakeholder survey, which would be undertaken in the coming academic year to explore the possibility of prescribing a minimum of 5.5 in IELTS. The submitted college council meeting minutes indicates the future possibility of revising the admission requirements, however, it does not demonstrate detailed feedback or suggestion for improvement. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the admission policy should be regularly revised considering students' performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders, in addition to national and international benchmarks.



## 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: *Partially Addressed***

- The academic staff recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion are detailed in the Human Resources Policies, Procedure for Recruitment & Appointment of Academic Staff, Academic Staff Appraisal Policy and the RUW Academic Promotion Regulations. Upon recruitment, the Human Resources Department along with the Office of the Academic Vice President, organise a comprehensive staff orientation programme, in addition to a College-specific induction for all new and existing academic staff including part-time academic staff. The Panel was provided with evidence showcasing the implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of this process.
- The Panel was provided with examples on how procedures for staff recruitment, appraisal and promotion were carried out, including the Academic Staffing Needs Form, samples of job posts on the RUW's website and a sample of annual appraisal for one of the academic staff which includes self-appraisal. While these clearly outline the processes, the Panel received inconsistent responses during the interviews with academic and administrative staff, and therefore suggests that the College needs to ensure the dissemination of the procedures for recruitment, appraisal, and promotion among staff for consistent implementation. The Panel also noted that the staff of the Human Resources Department seemed not to be engaged nor included in the promotion process aspects, and hence, suggests involving them to ensure that academic staff are provided with consistent and transparent support by the Department.
- Scientific research at RUW is guided by a broad range of documents. These include the Definition of Research, Scholarship & Scholarly Activities at RUW and the RUW Research Ethos and RUW Research Policy. This is in addition to the RUW Research Strategic Plan and RUW College Research Themes, with which any individual research should be aligned. Research proposals by academic staff are approved at the college level, then sent for evaluation by the Scientific Research and Postgraduate - Studies Council and finally approved by the Academic Vice President.
- Academic staff workload is based on the HEC regulations and defined in the RUW Academic Workload Policy, which is also calculated using the Academic Staff Workload Calculation Template. In accordance with HEC regulations, the teaching load varies according to the rank. In terms of recognising time for research, the Panel learned during the site visit, that this was under review to be complementing the current allocation for teaching together with other tasks. Therefore, the Panel recommends that time allocation

for research and scholarship activities to be revised and aligned with transparent workload planning for academic staff.

- According to the SER, the GRD programme has one full-time Associate Professor, four full-time Assistant Professors, two full-time Lecturers, one Teaching Assistant and three part-time instructors. The SER describes the academic staff as qualified academics with previous academic experience or industrial background and indicates that three full-time academic staff have attained a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy which is based in the United Kingdom. The provided evidence shows that the staff retention rate for CAD in the last five years was 84.12% and that there was a good retention of staff members, although no clear information was provided regarding monitoring staff turnover. Therefore, the Panel recommends that RUW should implement effective measures to monitor staff turnover and ensure the retention of highly qualified academic staff members.
- The Professional Development (PD) process at RUW is detailed in the Professional Development Policy for Academic Staff, which states that RUW is committed to allocate a minimum of 2% of the total revenue for staff PD, according to HEC regulations. Moreover, the CAD Professional Development Plan 2022-2023 demonstrates a consolidated approach to reporting the range of PD activities. It is worth highlighting the nomination of staff to attend the Advanced Higher Education Academic SheLeads+ Women Academic Leaders Programme as evidence of academic staff engaging with important efforts to develop skills for women to thrive in higher education. From the SER and the submitted evidence, such as the Sample CAD Professional Development Report, the Panel notes with appreciation a variety of activities such as workshops and courses being provided to staff and those attended by academic staff at national and international levels. While the Panel was provided with some evidence of reporting and collation of such activities, there was not sufficient evidence of their monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the Panel advises RUW to formalise the monitoring and evaluation of PD activities.

### **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: *Partially Addressed***

- Based on the SER, RUW provides specialised GRD studios and computer laboratories, in compliance with HEC requirements. This is in addition to a library, which includes quiet group study areas. Information on infrastructure and facilities supplied to support the programme teaching and learning needs was provided in the RUW Halls and Buildings

List, and all were seen by the Panel during the on-site campus tour. The Panel notes that the studios are equipped with industry-standard hardware and software, which support students in the development of disciplinary skills and expertise in line with graduate attributes.

- IT facilities are managed by the RUW IT Department, and the support offered includes the campus being fully Wi-Fi enabled and an RUW email ID address is provided to every student as well as academic and administrative staff to facilitate communication. However, during the on-site campus tour, the Panel noted that the computer laboratories did not include the latest versions of the used software for GRD. Therefore, the Panel recommends that RUW should ensure that computer laboratories are updated with the latest versions of the software to be made available for students and staff.
- RUW's Library has a dedicated CAD section with 4290 copies of references. For the GRD programme, at least three references or recommended books for each course are available, and upon request of academic staff through a book order form, additional references can be added to serve the programme needs. However, during the on-site campus tour, the Panel observed that a wide range of hardcopies are outdated in the library and do not reflect the current practices and application in art and design. Therefore, the Panel recommends that RUW should ensure that the hard copies of textbooks and reading materials are kept up to date.
- Access to online databases and academic repositories is available to students through the RUW Library and the WVU Library. The Panel finds that library facilities are appropriate with respect to study spaces and accessibility of resources.
- The Panel did not find sufficient evidence or description of the formal mechanisms used to ensure the maintenance of the resources nor to measure their adequacy. Furthermore, no additional reflection was given during the interviews with stakeholders on this aspect. Hence, the Panel recommends that CAD should employ a formal mechanism to ensure maintenance of the resources and ongoing measuring for their adequacy. Moreover, during the interviews, it was confirmed that technicians' support was no longer provided which makes students reliant on the academic staff to supervise their work when dealing with machinery. Hence, the Panel recommends that CAD should employ technicians to support staff and students.
- A Health and Safety Committee has been established to implement the requirements of the RUW Campus Health & Safety Policy and is responsible for hosting awareness and training sessions and fire drills in collaboration with the concerned parties. During the on-site campus tour as well as the interviews, the Panel was satisfied that there is appropriate health and safety provision in RUW.

## 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**

- RUW is using Power Campus Self-Service as an institution-wide Student Information System (SIS). This system is utilised to inform decision-making at various levels, including student advising, giving feedback on attendance, identifying students at-risk of academic failure, and highlighting meritorious academic performance which can qualify for a Dean's List Award. Moodle is also used as the main LMS for uploading course specifications, teaching material, assessment documents and any online delivery of classes.
- Moodle usage is monitored on a weekly basis and reports are produced to inform decision-making for enhancing virtual classroom activities. The RUW Library also generates usage reports for Turnitin and other databases as part of a monthly status report. The Panel was provided with a sample of the Deans' Council minutes of meeting discussing the Library Monthly Report for the academic year 2019-2020, in order to increase the usage of electronic databases. However, during interviews, the Panel observed that the use of SIS for decision-making was poorly discussed and addressed. Moreover, the Panel noted that the library and computers usage reports were only provided as bulk data, with limited detail of individual use and no means to track students' engagement. Therefore, the Panel recommends that CAD should introduce the means to track each user individually in order to extract data per programme, staff and student which will enhance the decision-making process.
- The Security of Students Records Policy of RUW indicates that the Office of the Registrar (OR) is responsible for securing all students' records and results, including admissions records, examination papers, transcripts, course folders, attendance records. This is in addition to the RUW Disaster Recovery Policy, which the RUW IT Department is responsible for its implementation to ensure that proper resources are available for all data backups. RUW has also implemented the Policy for Grade Approval with the aim of ensuring accuracy of students' results. Grades are verified by the Dean and discussed and approved in the College Council, after which, final grades are approved by the Deans' Council and sent to the OR for publishing. The OR is also responsible for issuing the certificates and transcripts and releasing them to students in a timely manner. The Panel is satisfied that there are proper policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of learners' records, and certificate issuance.

## 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**

- Information regarding admissions, registration, fees, advising, and resources are available to students through the RUW website and the RUW Students Handbook. At the university level, the Office of Student Life (OSL) conducts an induction to all new students, and transferred students from other institutions, at the beginning of each academic semester. Moreover, during the Library Open Day, further induction and support are provided to students to help develop the skills needed using the range of available resources. During the interviews with the current students, the Panel was satisfied that students are well aware of the university's support services.
- Upon registration, and according to the RUW Academic Advising Policy all new students are assigned an Academic Advisor whom they can regularly meet for discussion of academic matters. New students are informed about their Academic Advisor through Power Campus Self-Service and the OR. The Panel discussed the role of the Academic Advisor with students and academic staff during the interviews, with students showing appreciation for the availability and helpfulness of their Advisors.
- RUW provides students with career counselling *via* various means, such as the organisation of the Annual Career Fair by the OSL, which is attended by a number of potential employers, many of whom interview students for their placements, according to the Career Fair Report. Students are also supported to participate in workshops, seminars, and competitions locally, regionally, and internationally. During the interviews, the staff, students, and alumnae have positively confirmed the variety of career guidance services and activities. The Panel appreciates the variety of career guidance services and activities that are provided to RUW students to prepare them for their career paths.
- RUW has a Special Needs Policy that addresses learners with special learning and physical challenges. Based on their specific medical requirements, students complete a support request form, that is processed by the OR and forwarded to the Dean. Any special arrangements needed for teaching or examinations are made and implemented based on the policy and with the support of the OSL. In addition, RUW provides financial aid to eligible students, as per the Financial Aid Programme stated in the RUW Student Handbook. The Panel was able to confirm during the interviews that necessary mechanisms are in place to integrate equal opportunities for diverse learners.

- At-risk students are tracked by the SIS and the assigned Academic Advisors meet them to encourage them to engage to improve their performance, as well as to check if any additional support in teaching is required. Although, the SER outlines a process of timely intervention which is enabled by the monitoring system and through which students' progress is assessed, the evidence provided was insufficient to clarify the practice in detail as being undated and lacking in more recent examples. Therefore, the Panel advises RUW to ensure the availability of clear documentation, so evidence can be collected for reference when required.
- The SER mentions the regular assessment and improvement of student support services in response to the findings of the RUW Graduate Exit Survey. No sufficient evidence was provided to demonstrate how these findings were used to inform decision-making at the programme level, however, during interviews, examples were provided on how the student feedback was considered to launch new support services.

## 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.*

#### 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 RUW Assessment Policy indicates that the assessment methods could vary for each course, but must include mid-term and final examinations, as well as class participation. The SER states that, within CAD, academic standards are monitored by a process of internal review to ensure that assessment methods are appropriate in terms of their validity and reliability. Furthermore, the GRD Programme Specification identifies a set of assessment methods that are mapped to the domains of the PILOs, these include projects, portfolios, presentations, practical and group work, in addition to the above-mentioned mandatory methods. The provided Course Specifications within the Course Portfolios also show the variety of assessment methods according to the complexity of the course, their weights and alignment with the CILOs. The Panel finds that the assessment methods used within the programme are valid, reliable, and appropriate in terms of complexity and in terms of supporting the achievement of academic standards.
- A CILO Achievement Assessment matrix is prepared at the end of the semester for each course to assess the achievement of the CILOs, and during the interviews with the academic staff, the Panel was able to confirm that that CILOs are assessed at each point of assessment. This, overall, contributes to the achievement of the PILOs and graduate attributes, however, as mentioned in Indicator 1.2, there is still a need for mapping the CILOs to the PILOs to make it clearer which CILOs exactly contribute to the achievement of each PILO.
- At the College level, monitoring the implementation and improvement of assessment is carried out by the Head of Department (HoD) in conjunction with the academic staff. The College Council further monitors the assessment process and outcomes *via* a review each semester. As per the SER, Course Portfolios are audited by the HoD and the Dean to ensure completeness, at the end of every semester. These are further checked by the

Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit (QAAU), that will recommend actions for improvement in case any issue is encountered. The Panel was provided with minutes of meeting indicating the amendments to assessment are ratified by the College Council and, where required, any major changes are approved by the Teaching & Learning (T&L) Committee.

- However, from the evidence provided and the interviews, the Panel finds that although there is a clear implemented practice for monitoring the implementation and improvement of the assessment process, a formal documented mechanism is missing. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a clear formal mechanism for monitoring the implementation and improvement of the assessment process.

### **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**

- Policies and procedures for academic integrity including an ethical approach to scientific research are contained within the University's Academic Integrity Code, which is documented in the RUW Student Handbook and Plagiarism Awareness Handbook. All new students receive a copy of both documents during their orientation, and they are also uploaded on the webpage of every course. Moreover, individual Course Specifications include a disclaimer reminding students to read about plagiarism in the Student Handbook, and also reminders are sent to students around periods of examination. This is in addition to the plagiarism awareness sessions organised by the library.
- CAD ensures that processes for detecting instances of plagiarism are in place, with Turnitin being used consistently to highlight similarity in written assessment and to raise academic staff and students' attention to any concerns. RUW has amended the plagiarism criteria, based on the results of the benchmarking activity carried out by the T&L Committee with WVU. For CAD programmes, the amendments were mainly to address the potential for visual plagiarism, including the threshold for similarity of 30% for student submissions, as evident in the Plagiarism Criteria for Colleges document. Reference to visual plagiarism tools was also made, including TinEye and Google Image Search. The Panel acknowledges the attention paid to this, nevertheless, it is useful to reflect upon, and refine the similarity level for visual plagiarism.



- The SER clarified how cases of plagiarism and/or academic misconduct are recorded, and that these are then forwarded to a Disciplinary Committee to investigate and apply penalties, where necessary. The Panel was supplied with a sample of the Disciplinary Incident Report Form, which recorded a cheating attempt, and the Senate Standing Committee Meeting Minutes, including the discussion and approval of the Disciplinary Committee decisions. The Panel is satisfied that cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism are recorded and that necessary actions are taken.

### **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: *Partially Addressed***

- The RUW Assessment Policy includes formal procedures to support both internal and external moderation of assessment. With respect to internal moderation, CAD conducts verification of Course Specifications using pre-defined quality criteria, where assessment briefs are revised in terms of fairness, consistency before being distributed to the students. The main assessments (mid-term and final examinations) are internally pre-moderated using the Quality Criteria for Evaluating Instructor's Assessment Design, to ensure alignment with the CILOs as well as fairness of grading schemes. Second marking is conducted as internal post-moderation, where a sampling approach is followed for all summative assessment to ensure fairness of grading.
- The Panel was provided with evidence of verification of course specifications, assessment briefs and second marking reports, in addition to the ones included in the Course Portfolios. However, during the interviews with the academic staff, it has been noted that no action is taken to change the students' grade, although the SER states that more than 10% difference between first and second marking leads to a change in the grade. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that actions are taken to review all the students' work and update their grade if the marking differences go beyond 10% when second marking is carried out. During the interviews, the Panel found that internal moderators were selected by their area of expertise and that the second-marking process was well known and conducted. However, the Panel found a lack of documentation in terms of how the selection or appointment of internal moderators takes place within CAD. Therefore, the Panel suggests formalising the process of selecting internal moderators. Furthermore, the Panel was not provided with sufficient evidence to demonstrate critical and consistent internal moderation that contributes to course and programme enhancement. The Panel, therefore, recommends that RUW should develop and implement a robust and transparent mechanism to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of internal moderation.

- The External Examining and External Verification Policy details the external moderation, examination, and verification as well as the selection and appointment of external examiners/ verifiers. The Panel was provided with evidence which showed a breadth of scope for identifying international expertise and noted the benefit that such a breadth would bring to CAD programmes. External moderation takes place at the end of every semester for a sample of courses through a verification of course folders, second marking and co-examination which ensures assessment has been carried out fairly and uniformly. The External Verifier's Report is filled by external examiners/verifiers covering an appropriate range of areas for providing feedback, including appropriateness of the course content, appropriateness of assessment, weightage, marking criteria, and students' performance level. During the Panel's meetings with external examiners and verifiers, it was confirmed that the feedback report was filled and collected consistently.
- With regards to monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the external moderation process, the Panel was provided with a CAD template specifically looking for evidence where examiners have provided 'informative feedback' and 'actionable suggestions' as part of the process of evaluating the effectiveness of external moderation activities. However, this template is not yet implemented, hence, the Panel urges the College to expedite its implementation.

### **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: Addressed**

- The RUW Internship Policy and Procedure explains the management and evaluation processes of the work-based learning course, as well as the responsibilities of the related stakeholders including the students, HoD and the employer. Moreover, the university's Career Guidance and Internship Unit is in place to help support equivalency through the maintenance of relevant information. The Internship Policy and Procedure document is available in the DMS and uploaded in the internship course webpage for students. In line with the policy, CAD has an Internship Coordinator, as presented in the CAD Organisational Chart, so that management at a local level is carried out, in partnership with the College's senior management.
- Students are eligible to undertake the 'Internship' (DES 399), which is a 200-hour, six weeks course, upon completion of 66 credit hours, as a pre-requisite to register. The Programme Handbook provides detail on student eligibility, course pre-requisites and the benefits of work-based learning. Information regarding the contribution to PILOs is

introduced in the Programme Handbook and detailed in the Internship Course Specification, within which the latter document demonstrates how skills, knowledge and expertise are being developed *via* the CILOs towards the achievement of the relevant PILOs. The Panel notes that CILOs have been thoroughly mapped to the course structure which supplies a useful framework and provides detail regarding monitoring and assessment activities.

- Assessment of the Internship course is done according to the RUW Internship Policy and Procedure. Mechanisms such as attendance monitoring, student reflection and employer feedback contribute to a holistic overview of students' internship experience which also includes examples of work that has been undertaken. Assessment is then carried out based on the range of data available to the Course Instructor. Evidence such as Sample Internship Report, and Employer Feedback Discussion Form were provided to the Panel showcasing the implementation of the process.
- The RUW Internship Policy indicates that site visits, phone calls and emails are used to receive feedback about students' performance and progress from the employer. However, during the interviews, the Panel noted some inconsistency in terms of the number of visits to the workplace. Although the Internship Policy states that the Internship Coordinator should conduct at least one visit per month and make at least bi-weekly (twice a month) contacts with the employer to monitor the student's progress, during interviews, the Panel learned that visits by the Internship Coordinator were not conducted and that communication had consisted of only two phone calls, one at the beginning and the other at the end of the students' Internship. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should adhere to the Internship Policy by conducting monthly visits and maintaining at least bi-weekly contacts with the employer for ensuring a consistent students' experience and monitoring of their achievement.
- A range of information contributes to activities, which aim to evaluate the effectiveness of the Internship and its contributions to students' achievement of PILOs. This includes feedback from the relevant stakeholders, such as from the Student Course Evaluation, and Student and Employer Internship Survey. One of the changes made, which is added to the Course Specification, is to include a larger percentage contribution to the grade by the employer (from 10% to 40%) in the academic year 2017-2018. Another example is the enhancement of software skills that are regarded as important both by students and Internship providers. Goals have been included in the CAD Improvement Plan to ensure that such improvements are made. Implementation of changes was also confirmed during the interviews.
- The interviewed group of the programme alumnae gave examples of how students' independence has been cultivated during the period of study, which is then translated into a successful career after graduation. However, the external internship stakeholders

raised some concerns regarding students' adjustment to perform in real-life work environments in terms of working within limited supervision. Thus, the Panel advises the College to further investigate the feedback from the external internship stakeholders with regard to the graduates' capabilities and level of independence.

### **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 GRD programme offers a Final Year Project (FYP) over two courses 'Final Year Project I: Research and Concept' (GRD498) and 'Final Year Project II: Design and Presentation' (GRD499), in the last year of study. For the first course, students develop a range of relevant and appropriate skills which situate a design project through an understanding of research and research methods, whereas in the second course, students apply the gained knowledge through the development and execution of a design project. The CILOs identified in the Course Specifications of the two courses highlight the advanced nature of this work, which contributes to the achievement of the PILOs, and programme aims. The Panel reviewed the relevant Course Portfolios and finds that the work submitted by students for assessment shows evidence of knowledge, understanding, and creativity in execution.
- The Undergraduate FYP Handbook clearly outlines the responsibilities of both the academic staff (FYP Coordinator, FYP Supervisor) and the students when working on their FYPs. The Handbook forms the basis of the first taught session for the FYP course (delivered by the FYP Coordinator to all students) and is uploaded to the course webpage making it available to the entire cohort.
- The Undergraduate FYP Handbook introduces a supervision schedule for students (at least one weekly meeting). The assessment of both FYP courses is also outlined in detail as part of the student induction and orientation and is supported by the documentation which is made available in the FYP Handbook and RUW Assessment Policy. For both courses, assessment includes presentations, mid-term report and a final report submission, and for GRD499, a jury with internal and external examiners is required. Generic marking criteria and assessment rubrics for each assessment task were provided as evidence in their respective Course Portfolios. Finally, as the culmination of their project, it is mandatory for the students to display their work in the Art and Design Annual exhibition 'Tasameem', which allows them to gain valuable experience in the professional

presentation and communication of their work. From the samples that were made available to the Panel, it was clear that the standards achieved for both courses reflect the successful attainment of CILOs and demonstrate the effectiveness of assessment methods in achieving levels similar to other programmes.

- To facilitate enhancement of the FYP, feedback is sought from students *via* course evaluation and through ongoing reflection on the process provided by supervisors and examiners. Based on the evaluation, several changes were made, such as adding new opportunities for presentation and the development of online portfolio formats and exhibition platforms. Furthermore, the FYP process is monitored by the FYP Coordinator and College Council. While the above efforts to monitor satisfaction and effectiveness are valuable, the Panel notes that the nature of the gathered feedback seems to be collected into an improvement plan which lacks some detail for each programme. Hence, the Panel recommends the College should develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure that the feedback on the FYP is regularly collected and discussed in order to inform the decision-making process.

### **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: Addressed**

- The Panel examined the Curriculum Plan (2021-2022), GRD Programme Specification, and Course Portfolios, which include students' graded work and was able to confirm the appropriateness of the level of students' achievements as well as compatibility with similar programmes. This was also reflected during the interviews with academic staff, students, alumnae, employers, and members of the CAC. The mapping of the assessment to the CILOs and the courses to the PILOs, which are aligned to the graduate attributes, further reflects on the understanding of graduate achievement. Moreover, the Panel finds that the GRD programme provides students with the necessary attributes to improve their work readiness after graduation. That is, within each level of the courses, it provides key knowledge and skills about the subject which contribute to future employability, such as in the 'Digital Illustration' (GRD222), 'Information Graphics' (GRD261), 'Publication and Editorial Design' (GRD263), and 'Corporate Branding Identity' (GRD364). This is in addition to the Capstone Project and Internship components that make a substantial contribution to this aspect of student experience and reflect their ability to create and innovate.
- The provided statistical data show the cohorts' analysis for students' enrolment until graduation for the past five years (academic year 2016-2017 to 2020-2021), the Panel

acknowledges the average retention and progression rate over this period, being 77.6% and 69%, respectively. The average graduation rate (calculated from three years 2016-2019) for the programme is 70.8.%, while the average withdrawal rate is 30.30%. From the SER, the Panel notes that the main reasons for students' withdrawal include personal reasons, as well as transferring to other universities due to family reasons, and suggests exploring some corrective measures to further understand and mitigate this quite high number of withdrawals.

- The provided evidence shows a seemingly high unemployment average rate within graduates (47%). The Panel also notes that the collected data for tracking graduate destinations is not completed by many of the respondents, such as those related to the position, name of organisation, and continuing studies, and do not show sufficient reflection for the GRD graduates, since the mechanism of RUW to track their graduates is done for all CAD programmes together. Hence, the Panel recommends that CAD should develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to track graduate destinations and employment rates.
- RUW undertakes a range of activities to communicate and maintain a strong connection with their graduates, such as alumnae surveys and inviting the alumnae as guest speakers. During interviews, the Panel noted that graduates were satisfied and willing to remain in contact with the University and academic staff. CAD also conducts annual employer surveys to gain an understanding of their satisfaction with CAD graduates and to help assess their attainment of graduate attributes. Results report that 96.43% of RUW graduates' employees were knowledgeable of their field of study and 92.86% had a good understanding of their job-related functions. During the interviews, the Panel noted that there is an overall satisfaction with the graduates' profile.

## 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.*

#### 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**

- There are appropriate institutional policies and regulations, which are regularly revised and communicated to stakeholders. These policies have been developed and applied across the University by all relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the Guidelines for Governance & Quality Management, RUW Quality Policy and the RUW Framework for Academic Quality Assurance provide a broad description of the University's Quality Assurance (QA) management system. Evidence provided to the Panel outlines how policies are reviewed in a timely and systematic manner, through procedures, which align to the published RUW Policy on Policy Writing. Moreover, the University's QAAU maintains a Document Control Register, which contains existing university policies, procedures, templates, guidelines, mandates, and handbooks. These documents are communicated to stakeholders in several ways including the QAAU webpage.
- Policy implementation at college level is guided by the QAAU and the Quality Assurance & Enhancement (QA&E) Committee. To further ensure the effective dissemination of policies and their consistent implementation, HoDs are members of the QA&E Committee which, as a Senate Standing Committee, reports to the University Senate. The Panel was provided with evidence of e-learning policy development, scrutiny and implementation which was necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a clear process of development and feedback, the Panel could note how QA&E representatives work together to accomplish their plans, reporting regularly to their respective College Council and seeking feedback on any decisions.
- Meetings of the College Council are used to raise awareness on academic QA issues and to ensure consistent implementation of policies and procedures at the college level. Academic staff are made aware of QA and its role through attendance of an orientation programme at the start of each academic year, where the RUW Framework for Academic Quality Assurance is discussed. This is in addition to a range of relevant workshops that

are also available for academic staff to develop their knowledge, awareness, and expertise in relation to QA processes and institutional requirements.

- Within its responsibility for implementing and enhancing the University's Framework for Academic Quality Assurance, the QAAU has developed consistent procedures to regularly implement, monitor and evaluate the academic programmes through practices of external review and verification. Within this context, CAD has hosted reviewers and examiners from local, regional, and international universities, such as WVU. This practice of knowledge exchange helps to ensure that the QA procedures match international standards and best practices through activities such as external examining, external verification of course folders and second marking activities. During the extension visit, the Panel found that there is a consistent application of different mechanisms to support the implementation of QA policies and procedures at the programme level. Various documentation provided to the Panel confirmed that, including the Faculty Assigned to Committees, the correspondence between HoD and Programme Coordinator, the weekly calendar with deadlines, managing QAAC procedures, the College Council meetings schedule informing about policies and procedures, and the Staff QAAU Orientation session.

#### **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**

- The Panel notes that the CAD Organisational Chart is appropriate for the needs of managing the programme. As per the Chart and the provided samples of staff Job Descriptions, the Dean has responsibility for the overall academic and administrative affairs of the College and its development and contributes to the planning and implementation of the decisions of the College Council, Deans' Council and University Senate. The HoD is responsible for ensuring the effective management and delivery of the programmes and related courses and the overall standard and quality of academic, pastoral, and administrative issues pertaining to the programme. The HoD is supported by the Programme Coordinator and the Administrative Officer. The Programme Coordinator's position was introduced in 2017-2018 to support the College in enhancing academic standards and in providing a better monitoring of the efficiency and quality of the programme.
- A list of CAD Internal Committees is provided to the Panel showing the involvement of academic staff in the various committees at the college and university levels, where at the



beginning of each academic year, they are asked for their interest to participate. The list clearly identifies the objectives of each committee.

- The Panel notes that departmental and programme management, together with lines of reporting and accountability, are communicated to all academic staff through the Organisational Chart, and responsibilities are reflected in staff Job Descriptions. Any updates are communicated to all staff during the departmental and college council meetings. However, during the site visit interviews, the Panel noted that reporting lines across and through different levels of management were not always clear and, therefore, were not always effective in communicating programme-level needs, which could hamper effective decision-making for both the programme and College. These issues were resolved after the site visit.
- During the extension visit, the Panel was provided with evidence demonstrating that in the academic year 2023-2024, CAD developed a Functional Organisational Chart showing the reporting lines through and across different levels of management. CAD has also developed Terms of Reference for Programme Coordinators, which indicated that they report directly to the HoD. As per the updated Guidelines for Governance & Quality Management, the HoD reports directly to the chair of the QA&E committee, which is under the University Senate and headed by QAAU.

### **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: Partially Addressed**

- The SER states that internal annual evaluation and review is implemented using a routine mechanism, such as the review of the curriculum, programme specification, programme handbook, course specifications, software and human resources needs. This is in addition to the complementary data gathered from other activities, including the question-and-answer session with the students, the Graduate Exit Survey, Alumnae Survey, Employer Survey and CAC feedback. Moreover, the submitted Course Portfolios includes a reflection on the course by the instructor along with recommendations, where required. All the resulting findings are reflected in the CAD Improvement Plan, which its implementation is monitored by the Dean and College Council. During the site visit, the Panel noted that there was no dedicated annual programme review policy in place, nor a comprehensive annual programme evaluation report. However, these issues were resolved. RUW developed a new policy for the annual programme review of its

programmes, with clear procedures, roles, timeline, and respective templates. The policy was approved and implemented at the beginning of the academic year 2023-2024.

- RUW has the Periodic Programme Review Policy, which explains a range of formal arrangements that are in place to conduct periodic programme reviews, taking place at a minimum of once every four years. The programme has been subject to a range of external reviews by WVU in 2013 and 2022 and by the BQA in 2016, and the Panel was provided with the relevant review reports. Based on these reviews, the GRD programme received some recommendations, which culminated in enhancements made to the curriculum in 2017-2018, while for the recent review in 2022, improvements will be implemented in the next academic year.
- With regards to the internal periodic review, CAD has conducted a comprehensive review of the GRD programme in the academic year 2016-2017, which resulted in significant improvements in the curriculum, taking into consideration feedback from internal and external stakeholders. This revision was discussed with the CAC, the T&L Committee and approved by the Senate. However, the Panel noticed during the site visit that the following internal periodic review that should have been conducted in 2021-2022, did not take place.
- During the extension visit, the Panel noted that the QAAU developed, at the beginning of 2023-2024, a timeline for conducting internal periodic review for all the colleges which is expected to take place in 2025-2026. The Periodic Programme Review Policy was also revised and approved, with adequate procedures for internal and external periodic reviews. It also includes a clear description of activities, responsibilities, and resources, as well as the related templates. Overall, the Panel recommends that the RUW should ensure that all the internal annual and periodic reviews of the CAD programmes are conducted regularly in line with the newly developed policies and procedures.

#### **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: Partially Addressed**

- The RUW Benchmarking Policy and its related procedures and templates provide a comprehensive framework for formal and informal benchmarking activities and external programme reviews. The Panel notes the strategic partnership between RUW and WVU, which includes an agreement on benchmarking. A range of policies at the university level, including the Teaching & Learning Policy and the External Examination and Verification Policy were Benchmarked against WVU policies refers to additional range of

memorandum of understandings with local, regional, and international partners for the purpose of programme benchmarking such as the University of Bahrain, Dar Al Hekma University, and University of Huddersfield School of Art and Design, however, benchmarking has not yet been conducted with them. Alongside this, CAD is active in initiating international cooperation with a number of reputable design schools. During the extension visit, the Panel was provided with a Benchmarking Plan, however, no evidence was submitted to confirm benchmarking exercises with the selected institutions for the GRD programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that CAD should conduct a comprehensive and structured benchmarking exercise for the Graphic Design programme with other similar local, regional, and international programmes, that results in a clear benchmarking report to be analysed and reflected on the programme improvement plan, in adherence to the university's Benchmarking Policy.

- According to the SER, CAD carries out activities to seek feedback from current students, alumnae and employers, and findings are discussed in the College Council and are reflected in the CAD Improvement Plan. During the extension visit, the Panel learned that RUW has revised its Surveys Policy, at the beginning of 2023-2024, defining the survey type, ownership, and responsibility of each entity to implement, analyse and monitor. The collection and analysis of the surveys were done separately for each programme and the survey design was digitally adapted to each student answer according to its specific track, as seen in the Alumnae and Graduate Exit surveys. For the Employer survey, although the data was commonly joined, it permitted an independent analysis for each programme. Moreover, the Panel confirmed that the findings of the diverse surveys were analysed in the annual programme review and included in the Improvement Plan.
- RUW has devised mechanisms to increase the engagement with its stakeholders and to increase the response rate for its surveys. For example, at the University level, the OSL initiated the development of the RUW Alumnae Association through website registration. Moreover, the Alumnae Coordinator produced a CAD Alumnae Engagement Report which informed CAD Improvement Plan for 2023-2024. However, the response rate for the Course and Teacher Evaluation Survey of the academic year 2022-2023 was 29%. The Panel was provided with minutes of meetings of the College and Dean's Councils, and emails displaying the discussions for increasing the response rate. RUW has also made all surveys available by WhatsApp to facilitate the dissemination and increase the participation rate through Instructor dissemination to students. The Panel suggests creating an automated way to send WhatsApp messages to all students. The Panel also suggests that the frequency of all surveys be included in the revised Surveys Policy.
- During the site visit, the Panel noted the overall satisfaction of the different stakeholders with the programme's responses to their feedback and suggestions. This was apparent in discussion with stakeholders who described how specific changes were made to the programme based on their feedback - including alumnae, Advisory Board members and

students. However, the Panel noticed that some stakeholders were not regularly communicated to be informed of the implemented improvements, thus, the Panel suggests ensuring regular communication of all programme improvements to different stakeholders.

#### **Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs**

*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: Addressed**

- In order to benefit from external stakeholders' expertise, and to develop sustainable relationships which underpin work-based learning, CAD has an advisory committee (the CAC), for which there is a dedicated Policy for College Advisory Committees and a mandate. During the site visit, the Panel learned that CAC is currently being reformed by CAD, to further reflect the range of disciplinary expertise that is relevant to CAD programmes. CAC's feedback is aligned with a range of review and evaluation activities, and the Panel was able to identify how the programme has benefitted from external expertise, such as the introduction of relevant extra-curricular activities as part of curriculum revision in 2017. Moreover, during interviews with CAC members, they stressed on how they should support the programme by providing linkages to the industry and RUW's efforts to maintain programmes' relevancy, such as being invited as guest speakers to share their experience in the field of design. The Panel acknowledges that the CAC feedback is utilised in informing the development of CAD programmes.
- During the extension visit, the Panel was provided with a Feasibility Study, conducted by an external party for CAD programmes in December 2022. The Study concludes that 5% to 30% growth is expected in this sector in the next five years. Moreover, there is evidence that CAD developed a plan for the market study to happen every four years, being the next one scheduled for the academic year 2025-2026.

## 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 of Arts in Graphic Design offered by the College of Art and Design of the Royal University for Women.**

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

1. The Institution's initiatives to support the development of student's experience, critical understanding, and learning within community and professional context.
2. The variety of activities such as workshops and courses being provided to staff and those attended by academic staff at national and international levels.
3. The variety of career guidance services and activities that are provided to students to prepare them for their career paths.

**In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Royal University for Women/ College of Art and Design should:**

1. Identify a wider range of risk areas related to the quality of the programme and academic standards and effectively deal with these risks.
2. Expedite the completion of mapping all the courses CILOs to the relevant PILOs and the inclusion of this mapping in the individual course specification documents.
3. Regularly revise the admission policy considering students' performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders, in addition to national and international benchmarks.
4. Revise and align time allocation for research and scholarship activities with transparent workload planning for academic staff.
5. Implement effective measures to monitor staff turnover and ensure the retention of high qualified academic staff members.
6. Ensure that computer laboratories are updated with the latest versions of the software to be made available for students and staff.
7. Ensure that the hard copies of textbooks and reading materials are kept up to date.
8. Employ a formal mechanism to ensure maintenance of the resources and ongoing measuring for their adequacy.

9. Employ technicians to support staff and students.
10. Introduce the means to track each user individually in order to extract data per programme, staff and student which will enhance the decision-making process.
11. Develop a clear formal mechanism for monitoring the implementation and improvement of the assessment process.
12. Ensure that actions are taken to review all the students work and update their grades if the marking differences go beyond 10% when second marking is carried out.
13. Develop and implement a robust and transparent mechanism to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of internal moderation.
14. Adhere to the Internship Policy by conducting monthly visits and maintaining at least bi-weekly contacts with the employer for ensuring a consistent students' experience and monitoring of their achievement.
15. Develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure that the feedback on the Final Year Project is regularly collected and discussed in order to inform the decision-making process.
16. Develop and implement a mechanism to ensure gathering a representable rate of responses with regards to graduate destinations.
17. Ensure all the internal annual and periodic reviews of the College programmes are conducted regularly in line with the newly developed policies and procedures.
18. Conduct a comprehensive and structured benchmarking exercise for the Graphic Design programme with other similar local, regional, and international programmes, that results in a clear benchmarking report to be analysed and reflected on the programme improvement plan, in adherence to the university's Benchmarking Policy.