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National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Bachelor in Political Science
College of Administrative Sciences
Applied Science University
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 26-28May 2014

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Acronyms

AACSB	The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ASU	Applied Science University
BA	Bachelor in Accounting
BAF	Bachelor in Accounting and Finance
BBA	Bachelor in Business Administration
BMIS	Bachelor in Management of Information Systems
BPS	Bachelor in Political Science
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MAF	Master in Accounting and Finance
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MHRM	Master in Human Resources Management
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee

QAA-UK	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – United Kingdom
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Applied Science University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) was conducted by DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on May 26 -28, 2014 for eight academic programmes offered by CAS. These programmes are: Bachelor in Political Science, Bachelor in Accounting and Finance (BAF), Bachelor in Accounting (BA), Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor in Management of Information Systems (BMIS), Master in Accounting and Finance (MAF), Master in Business Administration (MBA) and Master in Human Resources Management (MHRM) programmes.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor Degree in Political Science (BPS) based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the Applied Science University (ASU), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

ASU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 24th. October 2013 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by its College of Administrative Sciences. On 3 March 2014, it was agreed that the exact date of the

site visit would be 25-29 May 2014. In preparation for the review, ASU conducted its College self-evaluation reports of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 27th. February 2014.

DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic fields of Political Science, Business Administration, Finance, and Information Systems and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised of ten external reviewers.

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

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

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

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

1.3 Overview of the College of Administrative Sciences

The College of Administrative Sciences is one of three colleges within the Applied Science University (ASU). The Programme Handbook 2013-2015 of the College states that the College was established in 2005 with a mission to meet the needs of Bahrain community and the region for specialised and qualified cadres in Administrative Sciences, Business Administration, Accounting, Finance, MIS and Political Science.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: Political Science, Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, and Management Information. The College offers five undergraduate programmes (Bachelor in Business Administration, Bachelor in Accounting, Bachelor in Accounting and Finance,

Bachelor in Management Information Systems, Bachelor in Political Science) and three postgraduate programmes (Master in Business Administration, Master in Human Resources Management, Master in Accounting) across the four departments.

The College employs 34 teaching staff members of which 30 are full-time faculty members. The SER indicates that the total number of students registered in the College during the academic year 2012-2013 is 1137.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor Degree in Political Science

The Bachelor of Political Science (BPS) is managed by the Department of Political Science, which was established in the academic year 2004-2005. The total number of students enrolled in the programme in the academic year 2009-2010 was 100 students. Some changes were made to the programme after it was reviewed in 2012-2013. There are 395 students enrolled in the BPS programme according to the conducted statistics in the academic year 2012-2013 statistics most of them are from Bahrain and some of them are from neighbouring Arab countries. There are seven faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme. The formal media for teaching the programme is Arabic.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor Degree in Political Science

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	Limited confidence

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 The BPS programme has a detailed and clear academic plan which stipulates the aims it aspires to achieve and they are aligned with the University and the College mission and vision. The SER shows details of the plan in terms of courses and their distribution across the four years of the programme. From interviews with the faculty members and evidence provided in the SER, it is evident that the revised plan which is currently implemented is based on the programme Advisory Board and student survey. The Panel appreciates that the programme has a detailed and clear academic plan which stipulates the aims it aspires to achieve and these are aligned with the University and College mission and vision.
- 2.2 The curriculum of the programme is designed to provide progression in the pedagogical and intellectual process as well as theoretical and practical skills from one year to another. Students move from general university requisite courses related to primary knowledge and skills to college-specific requirements, reaching the Political Science specialization with more breadth and depth in course contents. The Political Science courses progress further according to their sequence throughout the programme where progression of course materials reasonably correlates with the cognitive levels of the students. The Panel appreciates that curriculum provides progression in the pedagogical and intellectual process as well as theoretical and practical skills from one year to another. However, the Panel notes that the curriculum dropped/missed some of the important courses which are related to the local and regional countries in the Middle East. Interviews with faculty members and students reveal that the courses 'Macro Economics' and 'Micro Economics', which are compulsory for all students of the programme, do not link Economy to Politics; hence, they cannot replace the course 'International Economy System'. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the course 'International Economy System' should be added to replace the omitted course 'International Economic Relations'. The Panel also recommends that the course 'Principles of General Law' should be assigned as prerequisite to the course 'Constitutional Law'. The Panel also noted that the Department in its recent review of the programme has replaced the course 'International Law' by the course 'General Law', which is taught as a university requisite. However, in the Panel's view, the course 'International Law' is different from 'General Law'; hence, the Panel suggests introducing 'International Law' course again for its importance to a Political Science student. The Panel also encourages the College to reconsider the omission of the course 'Public Opinion and Media' because this omission contradicts the first aim of the programme as preparing students to work in public opinion organizations, as well as the increasing significance of social

media communication. It is not sufficient to include some topics of this course within the course 'Political Sociology' as it is currently the case. These courses are required in Political Science specialization and its graduates in Bahrain. The Panel also noted the provision of two remedial courses in English in addition to 'Political Readings' and 'Diplomatic Readings' courses offered in English. However, the Panel recommends increasing the content of courses offered in English and the inclusion of English scientific readings in most courses, especially at the two highest levels.

- 2.3 Plans of course teaching, in general, include course description, timetable for teaching the topics of the course, assignments allocated for each student, assessment criteria and course policies. From the review of content material of some courses such as 'Introduction to Political Science', 'Political Theory', and 'Old and Medieval Political Ideology', the Panel noted that the syllabus covers various topics. From benchmarking of courses with similar programmes in Arab and international universities, it is evident that there is a great similarity in terms of the intellectual fields and academic standard of these courses. The Panel appreciates that the teaching plans of courses in general are comparable in their content and level with the academic standards and the degree of the programme. However, the course 'Theories of International Relations' does not include all important theories such as 'balance of power's theory, 'realism theory', and 'game theory'. The Panel also noted that the description of the course 'Political System in Bahrain' includes topics related to the Gulf political systems and their political structures; therefore, the Panel recommends that the course content is reviewed to ensure that it addresses the political system in Bahrain with more details. The Panel also suggests the increase of Arabic Islamic content in the course 'Modern and Contemporary Political Thought' as the majority of its topics now refer to Western school of thought, especially after the omission of the course 'Arabic Islamic Political Thought'.
- 2.4 The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are aligned with the programme aims and stated in course descriptions. The academic staff illustrated that the Department adapted the UNESCO classification with regard to the six cognitive fields, which are (Political Thought, Political Systems, International Relations, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy, Political Sociology, Applied Political Studies). The programme aims are also linked to the courses as mentioned in the SER and this consistency is ensured through the periodic reviews of the Programme, external reviewers' reports, and labour market needs. The Panel appreciates that the Programme has clear outcomes which are appropriate to the Programme aims and the Degree awarded. Furthermore, CILOs are appropriately aligned with PILOs.
- 2.5 Overall, Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are aligned to the course contents. The CILOs for each of the compulsory as well and elective courses have been clearly stated. Also, the ILOs of individual courses have been mapped to the

PILOs as mentioned in the SER (Table 37: Programme ILOs and course mapping; Table 39: Programme aims and course mapping). The table illustrates that all programme aims and objectives are achieved in variant degrees. For example, whereas one objective is achieved in all courses, other objectives are achieved in other courses, and this is acceptable. The Panel noted that the CILOs of some courses are in general consistent with the PLIOs. However, the Panel noted that the outcome of students' research and language skills development needs to be embedded in more courses. Training on research skills is included in three courses only and it leads to writing one research paper only throughout the programme. This causes a weakness in these skills required by graduates, and it is confirmed by the employer survey results. Therefore, the Panel recommends that more attention should be given to teach students research writing skills and include this as an assessment tool in several courses where appropriate to the nature and level of these courses.

- 2.6 The programme has a compulsory course for internship (3 credit hours) with specified ILOs that are linked to the PILOs. Students are required to complete 90 credit hours before they are eligible to enrol in the internship course. They are allowed to seek placements in 14 organizations related to the political field such as the Council of Representatives and *Shura* Council, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Interior Affairs, public opinion and media organizations. Most of the interviewed students prefer to do their internship in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Some of the students did their internship in their workplaces because they suit the specialization. The Department allows students to do internship in their workplaces if these are in the core of their specialization. Internship performance is assessed by different entities: the organisation where internship takes place, the academic supervisor of the programme, and internship director in the College. Interviewed faculty members illustrated that the College is required to identify the topics to be covered by internship programme. The University Internship Policy states that internship course has to be taken during the summer semester, and this solves the students' problem of study overload during the semester in which training takes place. However, the Panel noted many cases where internship takes place in regular semesters with students studying many other courses. The Panel is of the view that this compromises student' benefit from the internship programme and the achievement of its intended learning outcomes. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Department should follow the University regulations and conduct the internship programme in the summer semester.
- 2.7 From the SER review and the Panel's meetings with faculty members, it becomes evident that there are clear teaching and learning policies and assessment procedures stated in the study plan of the programme and course teaching plans within the SER. These include tutorials, written assignments, graduation research writing, training and laboratories. Students are also involved in the learning process by presenting

their reports in class. In case of group work, all members of the group participate in presenting their report. Opportunities are also given to students to learn the art of negotiation skills. Students also have classroom debates to enhance their dialogue ability and accepting the views of others. The Panel appreciates the use of simulation method in the 'Art of Negotiation' course where the student takes a stand which he/she defends and learns how to defend others' opinion. The Panel also knew that the number of students in class which sometime reaches to 50 students in some courses has an effect on the participation of female students. The Panel is of the view that decreasing the number of students in class will particularly encourage female students to participate more actively in classroom debates and discussions. Despite students' denial of the link between their number and their classroom participation and the faculty members' confirmation of their experience in running large classes, the Department sometimes divides large classes into smaller ones, as in the two courses 'Introduction to Political Science' and 'Theories of International Relations'. The Panel welcomes the Department's and faculty members' efforts to encourage female students to participate in class sessions. The faculty members use the University textbook as the main reference and there are other references which are all recent. In order to integrate experience and practice into the learning process, visiting speakers participate in offering this course. Some of these speakers are members of the Council of Representatives and *Shura* council. Also, students make field visits to relevant organizations such as the Council of Representatives. The Panel appreciates the wide range of teaching and learning methods used and the faculty members' efforts of linking theory with practice and integrating experience and practice within the learning process.

- 2.8 The programme has a general policy of procedures to assess the academic performance of students such as written examinations, report writing, quizzes and class discussion and participation. Marks distribution is illustrate in course teaching plans and clearly linked to learning outcomes. There is a mechanism to enable students to be informed of their course work grades by meeting their lecturers who also provide students with feedback on their mid-semester examinations. Students interviewed confirmed that this feedback is useful to improve their performance in the exams. Students also illustrated that they sometimes approach their instructors regarding their marks in order to understand the reason of getting these marks. In addition to this informal method, there is an appeal mechanism where students can appeal to the Department on their assessment result. From interviews with academic staff at ASU, the Panel knew that appeals cases are few (2%) and the re-marking process is conducted in accordance with the University bylaws. The Panel appreciates that there is a general policy and procedures for assessing student's achievements and these are well-known to all staff and students. However, the Panel noted that the Assessment Policy adapted by the Department focused mainly on examinations as the most frequently used assessment tool compared to other tools

such as quizzes, assignments, report writing and classroom discussions; 30% is given to the mid-term exam and 50% for the final exam, whereas all other assessment tools are assigned only 20% of the total mark. This is a standard which is used across the University. In fact, this minimizes the value of this tool for the students. The Panel noted that students are fully aware of the assessment policies and procedures followed and they confirmed that faculty members are committed to their implementation. However, although the majority of faculty members acknowledged the right of the course instructor to suggest a different marks distribution, no instructor has made this suggestion yet. The Panel recommends that the Department review the mark distribution to ensure that it is appropriate to the programme type and level. The Panel also suggests that new tools of learning and assessment are to be used such as film and documentary material analysis.

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

- The Programme has a detailed and clear academic plan which identifies that the aims of the programme are aligned with the University and College mission and vision.
- The curriculum provides progression in terms of the teaching and learning process as well as the theoretical and applied skills from one year to another.
- Course teaching plans are appropriate in terms of their content and level to the academic standards and the degree awarded after successful completion of the programme.
- There are clear programme intended learning outcomes which are appropriate to the programme aims and the awarded Degree, and they are aligned with the course intended learning outcomes.
- A variety of teaching and learning methods are used to enable students achieve the programme outcomes and they link theory to practice and integrate knowledge with experience in the process of learning.
- Simulation is used in offering the 'Art of Negotiation' course, where the student adapts one stand and defends it and learns how to accept others' opinion. This contributes to the outcomes of the programme.
- There is a generic Assessment Policy to assess students' achievements and it is well-known to all staff and students.

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

- introduce a course in the principles of General Law as a prerequisite for 'Constitutional Law, and include 'International Economic System' to replace the 'Economic International course
- review the content of Bahrain Political System course to ensure that it addresses political system in Bahrain with more details

- enrich the content of the remedial English courses and include English readings in most courses, especially those in the highest level
- pay more attention to teach students research writing skills as a course assessment tool whenever appropriate to the course level and title
- follow the University regulation and conduct the internship programme in the summer semester only
- review marks distribution of various assessment tools with individual courses to be more flexible and appropriate to the course type and level.

2.11 Judgement

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

3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 3.1 The University has a generic Admission Policy, which includes both newly admitted and transferred students. The policy is based on student's GPA in high school. Following its review and implementation in the second semester of the academic year 2011/2012, the policy stipulates a score of at least 60% in high school for all specializations. The policy is published on the University website and in the University Handbook. Students interviewed by the Panel are aware of this policy. Although the programme is offered in Arabic, one of the admission requirements is to pass a standard English test given by the University. Based on the result of this test, a decision will be made whether the admitted student has to take one or two remedial English courses since the programme includes two English courses, namely 'Political Readings' and 'Diplomatic Readings' as mentioned in the SER. Most of the students interviewed by the Panel have studied one remedial course after the English placement test. The Panel appreciates that the Admission Policy is clear, includes newly admitted and transferred students and well-known to all staff and students.
- 3.2 The profile of students who are admitted to the BPS programme matches the minimum level of the programme aims as the University policy of admission allows the admission of only those with a GPA of 60% in their high school certificates, as mentioned above. The faculty members expressed their commitment to the Admission Policy while they are trying with the University to raise the percentage. The Panel suggests that a study is to be conducted to evaluate the level of students' performance at entry level to ensure that the minimum admission criteria is appropriate for the programme requirements. The Panel also noted that the level of admitted students in English is relatively low. This agrees with employers' opinion stated in their survey where they expressed their dissatisfaction with the graduates' level and proficiency in English. This indicates that the remedial courses are not effective. Therefore, the Panel suggests that these remedial courses to be revised in terms of their number, allocation, and scope of academic content for the purpose of improvement.
- 3.3 The BPS programme in the College of Administrative Sciences is managed by the Head of the Department (HoD), who is also the Programme Coordinator. The course coordinator suggests the textbook for students, and the Department discusses this suggestion. Sometimes, the University arranges with the instructor to write his own textbook, which is subject to evaluation. In addition to the HoD and courses coordinators, there is also a functioning academic committee structure which includes Study Plans Committee, Examination Committee Academic Equivalency

Committee and Recruitment Committee (*ad hoc*). The Panel appreciates that faculty members are well-informed of their teaching responsibilities and the importance of their contribution in the departmental committees. However, the Panel notes that the Promotion Committee has been formed only recently. Therefore, the Panel recommends activating this Committee due to its effective role in encouraging faculty member to engage in research activities. Decisions are made by discussing all issues related to the BPS programme at the committee level first and then forwarded to the Department, which in turn forwards them to the College and University councils.

- 3.4 The Panel examined the CVs of the nine faculty members, two of whom are part-time staff. The HoD confirmed that the part-time staff are responsible for teaching first year courses and some of the second year courses only. Since the total number of students registered as full time students in the BPS program for the academic year 2012-2013 is 395 as mentioned in the SER and the total number of teaching staff including the two part-time staff, is nine, student-to-staff ratio is 30:1 which is acceptable. The Panel noted that the faculty members CVs do not reflect that appropriate range of specializations is available for teaching all micro fields of the BPS programme. Therefore, there is a need to attract academic staff with appropriate teaching experience and with various specific qualifications such as international economic relations, Islamic political thought, and political systems of developing countries outside the Arab world. It is worth mentioning that the University Bylaws stipulate a specific teaching load in line with HEC bylaws; however, the University expects that all faculty members teach 45 hours per week. It also allows extra paid teaching loads of two more courses. In view of the fact that all academic staff other than the administrative staff in the BPS programme are assistant professors in rank, their individual teaching load is high (15 credit hours). The Panel recommends that teaching load of the faculty members is revised, and the number of academic staff increased by attracting those of micro specializations who are currently unavailable.
- 3.5 According to the University Recruitment Policy, and as stated in the SER, job vacancies are advertised regionally, locally and online. Members of the Interview Committee are representatives of various bodies in the University. Applicants are required to give a presentation on one of their works, and they are interviewed either in their home country or online. Contract renewal and retention decisions are taken by a committee consisting of the Dean, HoD and HR representative. There is a Promotion Policy which consists of three sections: teaching, research and community service activities. From a supporting document provided to the Panel during the site visit, the Panel noted that there was no application for promotion in the Department of Political Science before this year except one of the faculty members who was promoted from Assistant to Associate Professor. It became evident to the Panel that there is a connection between the teaching load of faculty members and their

inability to apply for promotion. As mentioned earlier, the Panel recommends reconsidering the high teaching load of faculty members, especially those who carry Associate and Assistant Professor ranks to encourage them to engage in research activities related to the Political Science field. The University organizes an orientation day for newly-recruited academic staff where they are introduced to the University bylaws and rules and have a tour in its facilities. They are also introduced to other faculty members in other departments. Interviewed faculty members expressed their satisfaction with the orientation day. The Panel appreciates that there is an effective orientation programme in place for newly- recruited academic staff.

3.6 There is an effective Management Information System (MIS) in place. During the site visit, the Panel viewed the mechanism of Student Information System (SIS) operation which is used for publishing timetables and students' marks. During the Panel visit to Admission and Registration Office, it became evident that students can now register online. A number of University bodies cooperate to detect plagiarism. Faculty members stated that the library, supervisors and external examiners assist in plagiarism detection, and discussion boards have a role in this regard also. They referred to the use of Turnitin software to make sure of any plagiarism incident in students' research. This programme is able to check Arabic texts because it includes Arabic database. There is a plan to enable students upload their projects on the University website directly without submitting them to the relevant entity. In BPS programme particularly, the faculty members confirmed that they do not use this software but they rather rely on their skills in handling this issue. However, they emphasized the role of instructor to stop this issue more professionally as plagiarism is increasingly committed with more professional techniques. In order to stop this issue, students are asked to write their research papers manually with the research supervisor overseeing the whole stages of preparing the research project. According to the HoD, the disciplinary actions in case of a plagiarism incident may lead to fail the student. The Panel notes the effort of instructors in this regard. However, the Panel recommends using electronic facilities available in the University to detect plagiarism incidents in line with the University policies.

3.7 The SER illustrated the procedures followed to ensure the security of students' data. During the site visit, the Panel also viewed the procedures in place to ensure the security of students' records and to maintain their results and documents related to the academic process by using a set of procedures to avoid any loss of these records in case of disaster. This is made by an ICT back up and disaster recovery plan. These procedures are adequate and appropriate. In addition, the University keeps paper as well as electronic copies of these documents, which makes it easy is to retrieve and keep them secured. Electronic copies of the same documents are kept in a secured remote place as well. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place by the College to ensure the security of students' records.

- 3.8 The Panel had a tour in the University building and found it spacious. The Panel confirmed that the building and infrastructure services in classrooms and for conferences satisfy the requirements of BPS programme. There is a big hall for student activities and another one where students can meet and do their group assignments. The Panel found adequate number of computer laboratories that are open for long hours for student use and this enables students to prepare their research papers. During the site visit and meetings with library staff, it was evident to the Panel that the number of opening hours of the library is sufficient for students to finish their academic assignments. Academic staff offices also provide them appropriate space to meet with their students. The campus was also found appropriate for students with special needs. During the interviews, students indicated that they buy their textbooks from the University. If these are not available, they are ordered and provided within one week or more. The Panel appreciates the appropriateness of the building and infrastructure services in classroom, conference and meeting halls, which are adequate for the BPS programme students' needs.
- 3.9 The Panel visited the library and found a shortage in references related to the Political Science and refereed academic journals and periodicals in both languages, English and Arabic. The Panel confirmed what was mentioned in the SER that the majority of Arabic and English periodical are mostly related to Law and there is absence of popular academic journals related to Political Science. The library staff illustrated that there is an overlap between the materials of Law and those of Political Science, but they mentioned that there was a subscription in three new academic journals this year. In addition, the University has subscription in 32 electronic databases such as the Arabic Standard Index in Riyadh. The library is trying to increase its acquisition of e-sources. The library staff confirmed that they contact with the Department of Political Science administration at the beginning of the academic year to identify its needs of new books and academic journals. Graduates informed the Panel that the number of resources available in the library is acceptable in general but there is a need to increase this number. Students also confirmed that whenever they need to read topics related to Political Science they use the internet. In case that no references are available in the library on these topics, the University helps them to get necessary permission to access references elsewhere (i.e. in the Council of Representatives). The annual budget of the library is allocated by a committee including members from different University bodies. The Panel was informed that financial resources are available to increase the library acquisition easily. The Panel recommends that the number of books and periodicals related to Political Science in both languages Arabic and English, including key references and new academic resources, should be increased.
- 3.10 When touring the University facilities, the Panel was introduced to the e-library tracking system used to track students' utilisation of the available library resources.

The system enables library staff to get a real-time count of student use of the library. The system shows the number of students who accessed the library portal and the most frequently accessed materials and classify them according to users' categories. The Panel members were also introduced to the Moodle system and how it is used to enhance the learning process and students' interaction with their instructors. The faculty members explained how they use the e-Brary to upload lectures and classroom as well as extracurricular assignments. Student also indicated that this system is very useful to communicate with their instructors and to do their assignments. The Panel was pleased to the existence of more than one tracking system (Moodle, e-Brary, e-library). However, the Panel recommends that these systems should be activated in a comprehensive manner to generate more reports to be utilised to support decision-making.

- 3.11 Academic advising is provided for students from the beginning and until the end of their study. There are two types of academic advising: one for all students including new and transferred from other universities whereas the other one is for 'at-risk students'. Academic advising is provided to students while faculty members are in their offices and during office hours which are posted on the door of each faculty member as the Department adapts an open door policy. Faculty members expressed that they find no harm in this procedure as there is a real need to provide advising to students whether being newly admitted, transferred or at risk. Overall, students benefit a lot from the office hours. This was confirmed by students and graduates. Some students mentioned that they visit instructors in their offices once or twice a week during their office hours and they always find them available. Students are also encouraged to use e-learning facilities. The Panel appreciates that the faculty members are committed towards their office hours to provide assistance and support to students who benefit from their presence. It became evident to the Panel that students prefer to attend afternoon classes because the timing suits their other commitments as most of them are working students. The Panel appreciates the department's decision to abandon the idea of offering the programme during weekends to serve students from other GCC countries.
- 3.12 During their meeting with the Panel, the faculty members indicated that an orientation day is organized to prepare students when they enrol in the University. Students were appreciative of this induction day and confirmed that the most important activities of the orientation are introducing them to the specialization courses, visiting the University facilities and assigning them to academic advisors. The Panel appreciates the orientation and induction day and the college's commitment to provide all support and assistance for students when they enrol in the BPS programme.

- 3.13 The University management informed the Panel that an academic support system is available for 'at-risk students' who are identified as those whose GPA is not more than 60%. There is a mechanism to assist students before reaching this status and it was illustrated in the SER. Faculty members confirmed that this category of students are blocked from online registration and they are required to discuss and agree on an academic advising plan prepared by their academic advisor before they are allowed to register online in four courses maximum. The Registration Department in the University collaborates with College Deanship, academic advisor and HoD to address the conditions of these students and provide academic support to them outside and within the classroom. There is a suggestion of offering extra support lessons for these students from the Department. All interviewed students, knew their academic advisors and praised their communication, their good treatment and understanding. The Panel appreciates the effectiveness of students' support system for 'at-risk students' and the way it is applied.
- 3.14 The SER supporting documents illustrate that students make field trips to the Council of Representatives, *Shura* Council, and parliamentary library. From interviews with the students of the programme during the site visit, it became evident that some of them attend the annual international book fair regularly while other students have attended the first conference of Gulf Media and some symposiums at the Political Development Institute. The University, as well as faculty members, encourage these extracurricular activities and advise students to attend them. Students suggested inviting experts in the Political Science field to deliver speeches in the University. The Panel appreciates the department's effort and its encouragement for students to attend such activities.
- 3.15 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is a clear Admission Policy for the newly admitted and transferred students, and it is well-known to all staff and students.
 - There are clear lines of responsibility for managing the programme and faculty members are aware of their administrative and teaching responsibilities and the importance of their contribution in Departmental committees.
 - There is an effective orientation and induction programme for the newly appointed staff members.
 - There are clear and effective procedures in place to ensure the security of learners' records
 - The University campus, infrastructure services within classrooms, conference and meeting halls are appropriate for the BPS programme students' needs.
 - The orientation programme for new and transferred students is effective and well-managed.
 - There is an effective support system to identify at-risk students.

- The Departments organizes several extracurricular activities and encourages students to attend and participate in these activities.

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

- review English language courses that are offered as remedial courses in terms of number, allocation and depth of content to improve admitted students' level in English
- activate the recently-established Promotion Committee to motivate faculty members engage in research activity
- revise the teaching load of faculty members , and increase the number of academic staff by attracting micro specializations that are currently not available
- utilize electronic facilities available in the University to detect plagiarism incidents.
- increase the number of books and academic periodicals related to Political Science both in English and Arabic in the library, including key references and update resources
- establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track students and staff usage and utilise its outcome to support decision-making.

3.17 **Judgement**

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

3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The SER shows that graduate attributes meet the aims of the programme which are linked to the PILOs. The graduate attributes reviewed by the Panel clearly include the ILOs. On one hand, these outcomes are linked to the methods of teaching and learning and with the various assessment tools on the other. According to the course specifications in the new study plan, graduate attributes combine understanding and knowledge, critical thinking and a number of skills. The programme management periodically evaluates the achievement of ILOs. The template of the semester report in the course file includes a section to explain how far the assessment tools used (such as assignments and exams) are successful in achieving each one of the CILOs. This is a good way of tracking. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that graduate attributes of the BPS programme are appropriately stated and are aligned to the aims of the programme.
- 4.2 There is a Benchmarking Policy at the University as well the Department levels which is adapted when conducting a benchmarking activity. The Panel noted with appreciation that the results of benchmarking activities made with British and Arab universities, in addition to external reviewers' reports, have resulted in the programme revision and development. From the SER, supporting documents and interviews with faculty members, the Panel noted that the BPS programme was benchmarked against similar programmes offered at regional and British universities. However, the Panel is of the view that the scope of benchmarking has to be extended to include international universities which follow the credit hour system. The Panel recommends that benchmarking should include the criteria of admission in the programme, assessment policies including the passing grade in courses, course contents and academic progression of courses.
- 4.3 The Department complies with the standard Assessment Policy that was approved by the University and was reviewed in 2013. All students and staff members are aware of this policy as it appears in every course specification of the BPS programme. The Panel noted that students' marks have to be approved by the HoD and the Dean to ensure fairness of marking and grade distribution before they are uploaded on the University website. The faculty members stated that the final exam is reviewed by an external examiner whose responsibility is limited to the revision of third and fourth year courses with some courses from the first and second year. There is evidence in the course files which indicate that faculty members in general are committed to implement the University Assessment Policy. The Panel acknowledges that there is a clear Assessment Policy which is implemented across the BPS programme.

- 4.4 There is a policy which the Department follows to ensure that assessment procedures are appropriate to the ILOs. There is an internal examiner for both midterm and final exam question papers. The internal examiner fills in an evaluation form for midterm exams. The form includes a table which reflects the achievement of ILOs and the alignment of exam questions with the ILOs and whether these questions cover all topics offered in the courses of the programme. The course instructor discusses the internal examiner's comments in the Department Council and then a decision is made whether to make any changes in the questions or not. There is an external examiner to review final exams by following the same mechanism. The Panel reviewed a sample of the students' assessed work in some courses and confirmed the alignment between assessment and ILOs. The Panel appreciates the alignment between assessment procedures and intended learning outcomes.
- 4.5 The University has a formal mechanism in place for internal moderation which was developed in the academic year 2012-2013 whereby both midterm and final exams must be reviewed by an internal examiner. Comments of the internal examiner are discussed with the course instructor first and then in the Department Council where changes are made according to these comments if necessary. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that the internal examiner has to submit his comments in a 48-hour period which is not enough if changes are required. Therefore, the Panel recommends to reconsider this period to give sufficient time to the course instructor to implement the required changes. Moreover, the Panel recommends that all forms of assessment – in addition to mid and final examinations- such as tests, assignments, reports and projects to be moderated by the internal examiner to ensure the appropriateness of these assessments to the content and course level.
- 4.6 The final exam is subject to external examiner review and faculty members stated that this practice is compulsory for all third and fourth year courses and some courses from the first and second years. It is worth mentioning that the Al-Yarmouk University in Jordan chooses the external examiner on the condition that he has taught the courses he is assigned to review. As mentioned by one of the programme coordinators, the use of external examiner is not simply a routine process but final exam evaluation is made before students sit for the exam and that some changes have been made based on the external examiner's comments. The Panel was provided with samples of external examiner's reports as part of the supporting documents. Although the Panel members appreciate the use of an external examiner; they recommend to extend the role of the external examiner to include all forms of assessments offered to all BPS courses. The Panel also recommends that the Department select its own external examiners and approach other universities offering the same programme whenever possible.

- 4.7 Students submit reports, some of which are prepared by a group of four or five. Upon examining the samples of these reports, the Panel notes that some students are not well-informed about the academic research fundamentals. The Panel also found that some of the group reports are simple and are not appropriate to what is expected in a Bachelor degree programme. This issue is particularly clear in both courses: 'Political Geography' and 'Diplomacy: Theory and Practice'. During interviews with faculty members, they explained that group work prepare students for leadership and the instructor follows students' progression on their allocated task. During interviews, faculty members clarified that they sometimes give the same mark for the whole group if the work was balanced. Further, the effort of each student involved will be revealed during the report discussion. However, the Panel recommends that the role of each student in the group assignments is specified accurately and is written in the marking scheme. The Panel examined samples of final exam questions and noted that questions of some exams focused on a specific part in the curriculum and did not cover some topics. The Panel also notes that it is difficult to compare the levels of student achievements- as represented in the provided samples of their assessed work-with international standards. This is because the minimum passing grade as mentioned in the SER is lower than internationally acceptable standards. The Panel suggests that the minimum passing grade to be raised to 60% instead of 50% in order to be comparable to the passing grade of courses in some regional universities. The Panel also recommends scrutinizing the assessment procedures and methods to reflect normal variation of students' levels and to conduct a benchmarking activity with other universities in terms of the minimum passing grade of courses as mentioned earlier.
- 4.8 The Panel noted that all graduates' grades were 'Good' and above with the absence of 'failure' in the results of the examinations in some courses. This has caused inflation of students' marks, and consequently high GPAs and grade values. The percentage of those with 'Excellent' was also high for the first two cohorts. This indicates the need to review the efficiency of student evaluation systems and exams. The Panel noted that the minutes of Department meetings have documented this issue and stated the need to increase the depth of exam questions. Basically, this problem was more evident in classes with limited number of students. The Panel emphasizes that the phenomenon of marks inflation needs to be addressed quickly and urgently. The Panel also noted that the level of graduates' achievements has been reflected positively by means of graduate and employer surveys whether those whom the Panel interviewed or those who were surveyed by the Department.
- 4.9 On examining the additional evidence provided during the site visit, the Panel noted that the percentage of graduated students to admitted students is acceptable, though it was at the highest level during the academic year 2011-2012. The faculty members attributed this increase to the large number of students transferred from other local

universities because they were closed. This has increased the number of students who graduated in a short period of time following their enrolment in the programme. The data reported in the SER indicates that the majority of students move from one year to another in the programme and finish their study in the specified periods; 93.2% of the graduates have finished their study in four years. Also, the SER statistics indicate a decrease in the dropout rate (withdrawal or postpone of study) and the Panel acknowledges that students finish their study and graduate from the programme in the allocated four-year period.

- 4.10 Students attend an induction session before starting their internship programme. According to the SER and faculty members' statements, the internship programme lasts for 120 hours over a period of eight weeks. The students interviewed praised the College efforts in helping them to find internship placements. Student's effort during the internship programme is assessed by three entities: the academic supervisor from the Department, the internship director from the College (responsible for the administrative aspect), and the training organization. The academic supervisor communicates with the industrial supervisor to keep a record of the students' performance. Students on the internship programme are required to write weekly reports about the internship achievements and a detailed report at the end of the internship period. Internship outcomes are assessed periodically in order to benefit from the industrial supervisor's observations along with the surveys distributed to student, graduate and employer. In conclusion, there is a policy and procedures in place to manage and evaluate work-based learning process. The Panel appreciates the periodical evaluation of the internship programme in order to benefit and incorporate where possible the feedback collected from the industrial supervisor, students, graduates and employers. The Panel also appreciates the College efforts in searching for placement opportunities for students and the follow up mechanism conducted by the three parties.
- 4.11 There is a graduation research course where the student prepares a research project in an applied subject under the supervision of one staff member. The faculty members stated that the first sessions of the course are dedicated to teach students how to write their research proposals. They confirmed that the research at the end reflects the student's rather than the instructor's orientation, whose role is to guide the students to some references and inform them of the proper research writing method. However, sometimes it is difficult to take the specific specialization of faculty members into consideration when assigning graduation research supervisors. Normally, the number of registered students in this course does not exceed 14 to enable students to benefit more from the class instructor and to give them equal opportunity to get assistance for writing their research papers. Students are assessed according to some rubrics listed in the applied research evaluation form. At the end of the semester, students present their project in front of a committee of two or more

faculty members in the presence of some students. The Panel appreciates this arrangement to extend the benefit of these projects to all students. On studying the marks distribution in the research evaluation form, the Panel noted that the mark allocated to the research layout (10 marks) is more than the one that is assigned to the student's analytic skill (5 marks). The faculty members mentioned that one of the external examiners has modified these allocations in 2012. The Panel appreciates the mechanism adapted by the Department for discussing graduation project. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that the Department reconsider the distribution of the allocated marks of each item on the project evaluation rubrics to ensure the academic standards of the project.

- 4.12 The Panel met representative members of Department Advisory Board who have many years of experience and are highly qualified in the field of Political Science. All members acknowledge that there is cooperation and integration between the Board and the Department and that there is a great support from the University President to the Board. The Board members also confirmed that the programme is an urgent necessity in the Kingdom of Bahrain as it creates scientific knowledge and awareness for students with respect to the current events and developments in the region as well as in Bahrain. The Panel agrees with the view of the Board members regarding the development of the programme, especially the need for regional (or area-based) studies. They also referred to the need for organizing training courses and courses for students to develop their skills in practicing democracy and dialogue. The Advisory Board members stated that the graduates of the programme contribute to its development. Two graduates of the programme worked as part-time staff in the programme when one of them got his master's degree abroad. The Panel appreciates the effective role of the Department Advisory Board and its contributions to develop the programme. The Board members expressed their high level of satisfaction towards the graduates especially when they were informed that the employers of the BPS graduates were highly satisfied with their performance
- 4.13 The Panel met employers' representatives who praised the graduates who are working in their organizations. To develop the programme, employers suggested that the University should not only rely on textbooks but also pay attention to issues related to international treaties. The employers also suggested inviting speakers from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other bodies to update students with the latest developments in the field of international relations and issues related to the Gulf security and internal affair aspects. From the meetings with the graduates and their employers, it was confirmed that the graduates of the programme find jobs and community service opportunities in accordance with the aims of the programme. A high percentage of the graduates whom the Panel met are either working in their field of specialization or a relevant field, while some of them are running their own business and all of them would like to pursue their postgraduate degree. There is

collaboration with the Alumni Office in the University to establish a database for them. During their meeting with the Panel, some graduates informed the Panel that they joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately after graduation and they applied all what they learnt. Also, there are some efforts from some graduates of the programme to establish a centre of parliamentary research, affiliated to the Council of Representatives. Moreover, some of the graduates had a distinguished participation in Manama Dialogue because they have trained on that in some subjects of the programme such as crisis management and negotiation. Those who joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed that the ministry's placement test was similar to what they have learnt in the programme. The graduates also agreed on the need to develop the English courses as mentioned earlier. The Panel appreciates the high level of employers and graduates satisfaction towards the BPS programme.

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

- The graduate attributes of the BPS programme are clear, well-stated, appropriately mapped to match programme aims.
- The programme was subjected to several benchmarking exercises; the results of which led to the programme modification and development.
- Final exams of most courses are reviewed by external examiners; and this has contributed to the improvement of the standards of these exams.
- Feedback of the internship programme is evaluated periodically and this contributed to developing it.
- There are clear procedures and mechanism for conducting the graduation project.
- There is an active programme Advisory Board that participates effectively in improving the BPS programme.
- Employers and graduates are highly satisfied with the BPS programme and its outcome.

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

- extend the benchmarking activity to include admission criteria, assessment tools, the minimum percentage of the passing rate in BPS courses, course contents and their academic progression
- expand the internal moderation system to cover all forms of assessment in addition to mid-term and final examinations. ; and reconsider the period of 48 hours given to moderate examinations.
- expand the tasks of the external examiner to include reviewing all assessment forms including midterm and final examinations of all courses offered by the programme

- directly select and appoint external examiners and approach other universities offering the same programme, whenever possible
- specify the task of each student when working in groups and document this allocation in the assessment rubrics.
- address marks inflation and control the assessment procedures and methods to reflect normal variation of students' levels
- reconsider the distribution of the allocated marks of each item on the project evaluation rubrics to ensure the academic standards of the project.

4.15 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 5.1 The ASU management system comprises a range of policies and procedures that are mainly included in the recently developed Quality Assurance Manual to provide a 'one-stop shop.' These policies are applied at the College as well as the Department level and they include: At-Risk Students Policy, Benchmarking Policy, Research Policy and Quality Assurance Policy to identify and control faculty members' responsibility, organize their work to ensure the availability of resources and infrastructure. By reviewing the SER and from interviews with academic and administrative staff, the Panel confirmed the existence of these policies and their application. Staff members confirmed that they are well-informed about these policies and that all new policies are discussed within the University committee structures and at the College as well as Department level. Each member in any committee is responsible to inform the rest of his team about the Committee discussions; and he has to follow up the implementation any of new policies and procedures. The Panel appreciates the existence of general policies organizing the College and Department effort and also appreciates the awareness of the faculty members about the University policies and their role in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
- 5.2 There is a hierarchy in the programme management that ensures effective leadership for the programme by the Department, College and University councils in addition to the various committees at the Department, College and University levels (as illustrated in Indicator Two earlier). During the interviews, Students confirmed that they have a representative in all Department meetings and he participates also in making suggestions. The Panel acknowledges the effort exerted at the Department, College and University levels to ensure the effectiveness of the programme management. However, the Panel is concerned to see the HoD himself is in charge of quality assurance in the Department beside many other responsibilities. This may disrupt his effort between administrative and academic supervision on one hand and quality supervision on the other. There is also a potential source of conflict of interest as well. The Panel recommends that this issue has to be addressed.
- 5.3 The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (AQQC) staff illustrated that the AQQC was established two years ago as development of the previous Quality Assurance Unit. Member of the AQQC are the University President, his deputy, Deans and Chair of AQQC. The Centre is the highest body that observes the Quality Management System in the University. The hierarchy of responsibilities with regard

to quality assurance starts from the course instructor, coordinator of macro specializations, programme coordinator, the College Quality Assurance Unit, the AQQC, and finally the Quality Assurance Board. Details of this process are the responsibility of the lower-rank entities, whereas standards are the responsibility of the higher-rank entities. Therefore, the programme aims and courses and their alignment with the assessment methods are subject to quality assurance system at the Department level. In addition, programmes are updated and reviewed every four years by the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee at the Department level as well. The Panel recommends that the Department should benefit from the outputs of Assessment and Moderation Policy and introduce required changes on the current assessment processes. The faculty members illustrated that QA standards application starts from course instructor who is responsible for preparing the course file as well as writing the course evaluation report. The course file is reviewed by the programme coordinator first, College Quality Assurance Unit and then by the AQQC. There are two committees (English and Arabic depending on the language that is used in the programme delivery) to review course files. Hence, the course files review is the responsibility of programme and colleges then the AQQC. The AQQC basically ensures that the course file is complete and has been reviewed by the course instructor. The Panel acknowledges that there is a system in place for quality management which is implemented, followed up and reviewed across all the departments placed under the College of Administrative Sciences. However, the Panel would like the Department to develop a clear mechanism by which all information provided by the internal quality assurance processes are utilized to develop the programme and ensure its quality, particularly with regard to the internal and external assessment and moderation policies.

- 5.4 One of the primary objectives of the Centre is to inculcate a quality culture among both academic and administrative staff. The Centre organizes a number of workshops and sessions to acquaint staff members with the requirements and practices of quality standards. One of the higher education institutions in Bahrain has organized a training programme to the College staff in this regard. During interviews, one of the new recruited staff indicated that he received training in quality assurance at the University (three or four sessions) and at the Department level by meetings the HoD and attending teaching induction sessions, in addition to sessions in the library. It is worth mentioning also that all quality assurance policies are available on the University website and they can be easily accessed and downloaded. Moreover, the faculty members demonstrated a clear understating of quality assurance arrangements and their commitment to implement these arrangements. The Panel appreciates the full awareness of the academic staff of these QA arrangements.

- 5.5 The Self-evaluation Report states that ASU has a recently-developed policy for the development and approval of new programmes. The Policy stipulates the need for conducting benchmarking, scoping the labour market needs, and collecting feedback from academic experts to develop a new programme. In terms of the procedures, proposals for introducing new programmes are submitted to the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee (PCRC) for approval, after which the proposal is presented for discussion at the College and then at the University level to get their approval. Once approved, the proposal is submitted to the HEC so that the new programme is licensed. The Panel notices that no new programmes have been introduced recently. The Panel is satisfied with the mechanism that ASU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes in the College.
- 5.6 The SER states that there are several ways by which the BPS programme is reviewed and evaluated. These include regular course evaluation reports, feedback from students, alumni, employers and the Advisory Board as well as internal and external examiners reports. All these are discussed in the Department meeting in order to evaluate students' performance and the level of ILOs alignments with aims of the programme. The Department also prepares an annual self-evaluation report at the end of each academic year to identify the points of strength and those that needs improvement and modification. The Panel appreciates these procedures and encourages the Department to continue with them and implement the recommendations and modification whenever necessary.
- 5.7 The SER clarifies that in terms of the ASU Programme Review Policy, the BPS programme has to be reviewed in a four year cycle. Therefore, the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee (PCRC) has to gather feedback from teaching staff, students and employers to ascertain the effectiveness of the curriculum, academic standards and their appropriateness to meet the needs of other stakeholders and to assure the alignment of the PILOs to the College vision and mission statements. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the BPS had gone through several reviews and the last periodic review resulted in improvements in the curriculum of the programme and its content, in addition to the ILOs as well as teaching and assessment methods. The Panel appreciates the reviews that the Department conducted for the BPS programme.
- 5.8 The Department collects student feedback on courses and their delivery at the end of each semester *via* the internet; and ensures that students cannot access their results before they respond to the evaluation form. During interviews with the students, they confirmed that their views and suggestions are taken into account and the faculty members indicated that they make use of students' feedback to develop and improve their provision. The Department also distributes surveys to measure graduates and employers satisfaction. However, these surveys are not conducted

regularly. The results of employer survey on graduate attributes indicated employers' dissatisfaction with graduates' level in the English Language. Analysis of the results of these surveys resulted in modifying the plan of the programme and improving some courses such as English Readings.

- 5.9 The SER illustrated that there is a Staff Development Centre to develop and train academic staff of the University. The Centre is responsible for following up and developing academic staff performance and identifying their training needs. Also there is an Academic Staff Development Policy which includes financial assistance for conference attendance and financial support and release time for academic staff to participate in these activities. The Policy stipulates that the University provided financial support for academic staff members' participation in conferences following the Department and College approval. The University management informed the Panel that they encourage staff member to submit research proposals for funding from the research budget with constitutes 3% of the University budget. Although faculty members acknowledged that the University supports their research, they also acknowledged that they do not benefit from this support that much. The Department also offer symposiums where a faculty member presents a topic for discussion in the presence of other faculty members and students. Moreover, the University organizes training courses and workshops regularly and faculty member confirmed their attendance and benefit from these activities to develop their professional performance. During the site visit, the Panel visited the Staff Development Unit and learnt that the unit keeps electronic records of all faculty members who attended the professional development activities and there is an allocated budget for these activities. The Panel acknowledges that these arrangements are in place and urges the Department to encourage faculty members to develop themselves professionally and academically. The Panel noted that the Performance Appraisal form includes a section on the staff training needs. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal mechanism to link the professional development needs of staff to the actual training activities conducted. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement a formal mechanism to link all staff training programmes with their performance appraisal form.
- 5.10 The SER states that the Department relies on internal and external stakeholder surveys to gather intelligence about the local labour market needs. The SER also states that the programme bridges a gap in labour market as it is unique in the Kingdom of Bahrain and due to the limited number of Bahraini citizens specialized in this field. Interviewed faculty members confirmed this claim and indicated that offering the BPS programme in Arabic is an attractive factor for students. In addition, members of the Advisory Board agreed on the need for this programme in the Kingdom of Bahrain and GCC countries. The Board members also believe that the programme contributes to the change of the political culture by preparing graduates

who are academically specialized in the field; and are able to contribute in political activities. The Board highlights also that the people in the Arab world are still not fully aware that Politics has its own scientific rules and principles. Nevertheless, some graduates expressed that although the labour market needs for this specialization is limited; yet it is new and in demand. In line with the above mentioned, the Panel encourages the Department to conduct a comprehensive scientific study to scope the actual labour market needs in Bahrain and in the GCC countries in relation to the BPS programme.

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

- There is a set of defined policies and procedures at the University, College and Department levels that staff members are familiar with and are involved in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
- Administrative and academic staff members are aware of quality assurance arrangements and their role in these arrangements and they are committed to implement them.
- There are effective programme review mechanisms that have led to evident improvements in the programme curriculum and content.

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

- separate the Department administration function from quality assurance management in the Department
- establish a link between the annual performance review process of all faculty members to their professional development needs.

5.13 **Judgement**

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

6. Conclusion

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

There is limited confidence in the Bachelor of Political Science of the College of Administrative Sciences offered by the Applied Science University.