Higher Education Review Unit

Institutional Follow-Up Review Report

Applied Science University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 25 January 2012

Table of Contents

1.   Overview of the Institutional Follow-up Process

The institutional follow-up site visit by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

At least one year after publication of its Institutional Review Report the institution submits to HERU a report which clearly shows how the institution has maintained and/or enhanced the commendations of the review report and specifies how the institution has met its affirmations and recommendations. The institution substantiates its claims with supporting documents, in the form of Appendixes. Details of how the institution is monitoring and evaluating the improvement activities should also be provided.

This follow-up review process applies to all higher education institutions that have had institutional reviews undertaken by HERU.

The Applied Science University (ASU) submitted an Improvement Plan to HERU in the required time set out in the Handbook for Institutional Reviews. In this Plan, actions were identified to tackle the 34 Recommendations contained in the Institutional Review Report. In October 2011 ASU submitted its One Year Report, which contained a narrative and documentary evidence about the progress the institution has made thus far in implementing quality improvements.

The Panel responsible for the Follow-up comprised the Executive Director of HERU and four Senior Directors, one of whom was the Director responsible for co-ordinating this site visit. The evidence base included: the Institutional Improvement Plan and the appendices submitted in December 2011 and the Institutional Review Report. The Institution also submitted supporting evidence on 23 January 2012. Interviews were also held during the site visit with a range of senior managers, academics, administrative staff, students, employers and alumni. These interviews allow the Panel to triangulate the evidence.

The Follow-up visit took place on 25 of January 2012, the purpose of which is (i) to assess the progress made in quality enhancement and improvement of the Applied Science University (ASU) since the institutional review in November 2009, for which the review report was published in June 2010; and (ii) develop a report which outlines the progress made about the extent to which the Recommendations have been addressed.

This Institutional Follow-up Review Report sets out the findings with regard to the Recommendations contained in the published Review Report. For ease of reading the Recommendations made in the 2010 published Review Report are clustered together (in italics) at the beginning of each sub-section where a different theme is considered. The text that follows reflects the findings of the Panel during its visit in January 2012.

2.   Brief Overview of Applied Science University

Applied Science University is owned by the 'Gulf Education Project W.L.L. Company', which is a limited liability company registered in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The University is registered as a higher educational institution under the Ministry of Education Licence Number WD 140/2004 dated 5 July 2004 and operates under the commercial name 'Applied Science University'.

At the time of the site visit the University comprised three Faculties (Colleges), and 11 Departments offering both Bachelor and Master programmes with 1,623 students currently registered in these programmes. The University employs 75 faculty members and 41 administrative staff of which 60 and 38 are full-time respectively.

3.   Findings of the Follow-up Review by Theme

In the following sub-sections, the progress made in addressing the Recommendations under each theme is considered. The recommendations from the Institutional Review Report are clustered together in italics.

3.1   Mission, Planning and Governance

3.1.1.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University conduct an institutional-wide debate that involves its various stakeholders, to ensure a shared understanding of its new Mission and Vision across the Institution.

3.1.2.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University review the mechanism through which it develops it Strategic Plan so that its planning is informed by facts and data and that the process is more inclusive.

3.1.3.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a detailed operational plan with timeframes, Key Performance Indicators, annual targets and allocated resources, to achieve its Strategic Plan. This should be done in the light of the revised vision and mission statements.

3.1.4.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University undertake more robust and independent benchmarking activities that include an in-depth evaluation of the quality of its academic provision.

3.1.5.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a policy on plagiarism; to monitor regularly its implementation and effectiveness; and to keep a detailed record of its execution.

3.1.6. HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a systematic policy development process that is informed by inputs from all stakeholders, including students, with arrangements for disseminating the new developed policies to all relevant stakeholders.

3.1.7. HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a transparent budgeting process which includes input from senior academic managers, Faculty Deans and Department Chairs and ensure the alignment of resource allocation to its Strategic Plan and core functions.

3.1.8. HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a formal process for the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of its Board of Directors.

3.1.9. HERU recommends that Applied Science University strengthen its Board of Trustees by expanding it to include qualified and independent external stakeholders while ensuring that the Board is independent of the Board of Directors and that its members' obligations to meet regularly are realized.

3.1.10. HERU recommends that Applied Science University, in accordance with generally accepted good governance practice, separate the powers and duties between ownership, governance and management and institute a process whereby the role and function of the Board of Trustees is fully defined and implemented.

ASU has a new vision, mission, and values. These were developed by consultants in the last three months of 2011. A Strategic Planning Committee was established to assist in this process. A focus group was also formed which comprised a range of staff to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the statements. The vision only refers explicitly to one of the three core functions of a university; i.e. teaching and learning. The mission makes reference to community engagement but it is unclear who ASU refers to as its community. In interviews with senior management the Panel was told its community is Bahrain and the Gulf region. (Community engagement is considered in section 3.9 of this Report.)

The revised vision of ASU is to be 'one of the leading private universities supporting practical learning in Bahrain and the Gulf'. The Panel heard in a range of interviews with different levels of staff that practical learning refers to linking theory with practice and that irrespective of the programme in which a student is registered they have a one semester internship for which they gain credits and grades. The internship will be discussed later in this Report.

No mention is made in either statements of research which is the second core function of a higher education institution. The Panel was informed in interviews with senior management that this had been noted by them but the consultants advised them not to mention this core function. In interviews with the consultants it was told that the word 'inquiry' in the mission statement could be seen as referring to research. This is a disingenuous stretching of the

meaning of the word in the context of its use. While the Panel recognises that the institution is an applied science university, with its emphasis being in providing work-ready graduates, it suggests that when the statements are being reviewed that research appropriate to its institutional type be incorporated into them.

ASU now has a revised Strategic Plan and flowing from this an Operational Plan for the years 2012-2017. Consultants were contracted in October 2011 and worked till December 2011 to develop the vision, mission and values as well as the strategic and operational plans. The stakeholders were part of the planning process through participation in a series of meetings at different levels. The Panel learned that the Board of Trustees has still to approve the vision, mission, values and the strategic plan but these are nevertheless being used. Given that the plans were only finalised in December 2011, and are at the very early stages of implementation, their effectiveness cannot be assessed. The strategic and operational plans have clear objectives, performance indicators, budgetary allocation, defined roles and responsibilities and timelines.

Whilst ASU has conducted some benchmarking activities, it still needs to develop a clear and detailed policy and procedure for different benchmarking activities to be conducted. This matter will be discussed in some detail in section 3.2 of this Report.

ASU now has a policy on plagiarism which has been implemented since October 2011. There is documented evidence of cases of plagiarism being investigated and the outcomes of the cases.

Whilst ASU does not have a documented systematic process for the development of its policies and procedures, the Panel heard in interviews of a clear process, which is being followed. This needs to be formalised. New policies are disseminated in hardcopy and through meetings.

There is a new budgeting process which begins with the heads of departments identifying their requirements in order to deliver the programmes. The human resource department supports this process. The heads of departments submit their budgets to the Deans who develop a consolidated budget for their college after which the budgets go to the Finance Committee for consolidation. It then goes through ASU processes for budget approval. This new process provides the link between planning, resource allocation and programme delivery.

The Board of Trustees has recently been re-constituted in line with the Higher Education Council requirements. However, it has yet to meet. The last Board of Trustees meeting was in 27 August 2009. Any meetings that have taken place since then have been informal.

Work on Recommendations 8 and 10 has just begun. In December 2011 ASU entered into an agreement with an independent body to receive consultancy services with respect to its

governance arrangements with the main deliverable being a recommended governance model. As a result the powers and duties between ownership, governance and management have not yet been delineated; the roles and functions of the Board of Trustees have not been developed and there is still no formal process for the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the Board of Trustees.

Given that the institutional review took place in November 2009, the Panel is extremely concerned that more than two years later the institution is only beginning to work on these and many other recommendations. As a result, the level of progress made is not as expected. The Panel appreciates that ASU has latterly contracted consultants to assist it in its development in common with many institutions. However, it is concerned that, as became evident in a range of interviews with different levels of staff, there is an over-reliance on consultants. It is generally seen by staff that the consultants will attend to all areas of improvement. The Panel encourages the University to develop its own internal capacity through making high-level quality appointments. Failure to do so constitutes a major risk to the sustainability and viability of the institution.

3.2 Academic Standards

3.2.1. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a process of independent external evaluation and benchmarking to which all programmes are subjected.*

3.2.2. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University revise its admission policies for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes so that a rigorous and robust admission policy, complete with selective and subject-specific criteria be developed and implemented.*

3.2.3. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University evaluate its assessment policy through systematic benchmarking and the use of independent external examiners for its courses, particularly at exit levels, and to ensure that postgraduate courses are delivered and assessed at appropriate advanced levels.*

3.2.4. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University utilize its Admission and Registration Information System capacity to generate data and reports to be used by its academic, management and governing bodies for informed decision-making.*

In its effort to develop and implement a process of independent external evaluation and benchmarking to which its programmes are subjected, ASU has conducted a number of benchmarking activities. These activities were mainly to benchmark the curriculum content of its programmes with similar programmes offered by a number of local, regional, and international universities. The Quality Assurance Committee developed general guidelines, effective February 2010, for the selection of institutions to be used for benchmarking

purposes. The Panel notes the efforts exerted by ASU to conduct these benchmarking exercise. However, scrutiny of the benchmarking reports indicate that there is no clear understanding on what output is expected from the benchmarking activities, as the depth and breadth of reporting varied from one document to another. Moreover, the Panel did not see evidence of formal mechanisms being used to report and act upon the results of these benchmarking activities. The Panel suggests that ASU revise its current policy and procedure so that it clearly states which benchmarking activities are conducted and why, what output is expected from such exercise, and how it will be used. Furthermore, ASU needs to develop a mechanism to implement and monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedure.

ASU also employs the use of external reviewers to review the status of its programmes. External examiners are contracted to review the content of the programme, syllabus, assessment methods and at the same time serve as external moderators for some courses within the programme; discussed in more details below. While there are clearly documented guidelines for the role of external examiners in the moderation of course examinations, the University did not develop a policy clearly stating the role of the external reviewers in periodical programme reviews initiated by the institution.

The University has developed a document named 'External & Internal Examiner Guidelines'. The Guidelines sets the criteria for the selection of the internal and the external examiners. The former is appointed by the Department Council at the beginning of each teaching semester, while the latter is nominated by the Department Council, approved by the College Council and appointed for three years. The document also stipulates the role and responsibilities of the internal and external examiners. The Panel was informed that the University started to implement these guidelines in the academic year 2010-2011. At the time of this site visit, examination papers of all courses offered by the University (for both mid-term and final examinations) were subject to the review of the internal examiners before and after setting the examination, while external examiners would only examine some courses and in some programmes there was only a single external examiner. For some courses external examiners were involved in commenting on the examination paper before students set the examination while others were involved only after the examination was completed and the papers were graded. These discrepancies, in the Panel view, limit the benefits of fully deploying an external examiners system. The Panel encourages the University to develop a mechanism that systematically identifies the courses subject to external examination and ensure that the assessment of all its courses, particularly those at exit levels, are periodically subjected to external examiners both before and after an examination is performed.

The assessment policies and procedures of Master courses were reviewed and reported on by a consultant firm in September 2011. The report had a number of recommendations, however, the Panel did not see evidence of these recommendations being discussed by departments responsible for the teaching of these courses. Moreover, interview sessions

revealed that not all faculty members teaching Master courses were informed about the content of the report. The Panel suggests that the University develop a mechanism to ensure that results of such reviews are systematically discussed and shared among all relevant faculty members.

ASU stated in its progress report that it has reviewed its admission policy. As a result of this review, the University has increased its requirement of a 'Tawjehiah' score of 50% to 60% for all undergraduate programmes and set the requirements of a Bachelor degree score at 60% for applicants to the Master programmes. The Panel did not see any evidence indicating how the University reached these decisions. Moreover, admission criteria are still flat and similar for all programmes, with no selective and subject-specific criteria. The Panel urges the University to conduct a formal study that evaluates student performances against their entry levels for all its offerings, in both its Bachelor and Master levels, and use the output of these studies to revise its admission criteria and develop and implement an admission policy that formally incorporates the needs of different subjects and degrees.

ASU conducted cohort analyses for some of its programmes. The Panel saw evidence of the findings being discussed in relevant Department Councils to inform decision-making. These analyses and discussions are at early stages and need to be deepened further. The University needs to identify further all major data analysis and information required for all its main academic functions with all its other core functions and, as stated in its Strategic Plan, to develop a 'data and knowledge management and reporting system' that can be formally linked to decision-making of all its academic management and governing bodies.

3.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

3.3.1. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a comprehensive University-wide quality framework, policy and procedures centred on continuous quality improvement rather than compliance to external regulatory requirements.*

3.3.2. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University review the responsibilities assigned to the Quality Assurance Unit so that they are more realistic and to expand its human resource capacity so that the Unit can discharge effectively its responsibility.*

3.3.3. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University ensure that there are clear lines of reporting with both monitoring and development responsibilities and that outcomes of annual reporting systems are used as inputs for planning.*

The University developed two Handbooks; the Procedure Handbook for Institutional Quality Assurance comprises the quality assurance standards for the institutional review, and the Quality Assurance for the Academic Programmes which contains four indicators to review academic programmes to be followed by all academic and administrative units. However, a documented quality assurance handbook with relevant policies and procedures has not been

developed. The Panel is of the view that a more formal written plan for quality enhancement and monitoring should be developed that reflects on how quality improvement and enhancement would be implemented. Clear policies and procedures that support the implementation of the plan should also be developed.

During the site visit, the Panel was given a proposal to establish a Quality Assurance (QA) Centre with a direct reporting line to the University President, the Panel heard during an interview with the QA personnel that this proposal is still waiting for approval from the University Board. In December 2011, ASU recruited a Director for the proposed QA Centre who will be supported by the Head of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit and one full-time administrator with the following responsibilities: to follow-up the implementation of the QA procedures in the University, to input data for all data to be used in the preparation of stakeholders input and cohort analysis, support staff in the implementation of QA procedures, and support faculty members in implementing e-learning. The University has also reduced the teaching load of the Head of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit to two courses.

The Panel found during interviews with QA personnel that there are different views about the roles of staff regarding quality assurance and the university's proposed system. The University needs to clarify the roles and reporting lines in this regard. Failure to do so might hinder the management of quality assurance within the University.

Whilst different units and departments submit annual reports to the President's office, the University did not establish a system to monitor and follow-up the provision of its annual reports. The Panel is of the view that the University needs to develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the progress towards the pre-set targets of its annual report.

3.4 Quality of Teaching and Learning

3.4.1. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop rigorous internal policies and processes for periodical review of all its programmes that involves relevant internal and external stakeholders in the form of Programme Advisory Board, to achieve sound academic standards.*

3.4.2. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop Programme Intended Learning Outcomes; map the course Intended learning Outcomes to programme Intended Learning Outcomes; and use these Learning Outcomes to guide the design of its curricula, courses, student assessment and teaching and learning methods.*

3.4.3. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University review; better develop and integrate the practical training courses required to complete its academic programmes so that the course is formally curriculated and assessed in order that the University fulfil its role as an 'applied' university.*

3.4.4. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University further develop its student feedback surveys and conduct them for both its postgraduate and undergraduate students, as well as use the results of these*

surveys to enhance the teaching and learning experience within the University and in decision-making processes.

The University has developed policies and procedures for the periodical review of its programmes. In addition, the Quality Assurance Unit developed a booklet detailing the implementation of the HERU programme review indicators. Copies of these procedures were provided to the Panel. In interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that internal programme review is carried out every academic year whereas external review is conducted every four years. The Panel also learned that multiple sources of data and information are used as an input in the review processes; these include benchmarking results, external review reports, Advisory Board feedback and results of students' surveys. The Panel was pleased to learn that the University has strengthened its ties with the private sector through the establishment of advisory boards in each college, in order to obtain their feedback on the improvement of academic programmes on a formal basis. During interviews with members of advisory boards from different colleges, the Panel was informed that, since their establishment three years ago, these boards have been meeting on a regular basis. Upon examining the minutes of some advisory board meetings, it was clear to the Panel that the members of these boards have an opportunity to comment on, and suggest improvements to, the existing academic programmes.

The process of programme and course intended learning outcomes (ILOs) development was initiated three years ago. The Panel learned from different interviews that programme ILOs constitute the basis for the design of courses, teaching methods and student assessment. Upon examining various programme specifications; it was clear to the Panel that course ILOs are mapped to programme ILOs and that they are used to inform the design of curricula and courses. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel displayed sufficient understanding of ILO development and gave several examples of how they are linked to teaching and assessment methods. The Panel was pleased to learn that the University has conducted several workshops on the development of programme and course ILOs for all its faculty members and that new faculty members are informed about an outcome-based approach as part of their induction programme. Moreover, programme ILOs are continuously evaluated and reviewed in light of the feedback obtained from external examiners and from external review of the programmes.

The Panel learned during interviews with academic staff and students that the practical training courses, which are required in most programmes offered by the University, are now formally curriculated and are assigned three credit hours. These courses are also formally assessed by the ASU faculty member and the corresponding industry representative.

The University has designed and implemented several student surveys; these include course evaluations, curriculum and course instructor assessment as well as a comprehensive student satisfaction survey; the Panel was provided with samples of these surveys and their

analysis. During different interviews, the Panel learned that these surveys are conducted by the Quality Assurance Unit and that the analysis results are forwarded to the Deanship of Student Affairs and to the corresponding academic departments. The results of surveys are discussed at the Department Council meetings and suggestions to address the survey findings are forwarded to the College Council, and consequently University Council, for approval. Staff and students interviewed by the Panel gave several examples of improvements in the learning environment made in the light of the surveys' results. The Panel was also pleased to learn that the feedback from students is also taken into consideration during programme review processes.

3.5 Student Support

3.5.1. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a mechanism to identify and support at-risk students and to evaluate periodically the effectiveness of the mechanism used.*

3.5.2. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University provide professional counselling services to students, with the aim of contributing to their academic as well as life-long success and their well-being.*

Although the University has taken some steps towards the identification of students at risk of academic failure, it has not yet developed policies and procedures for providing the required support for these students. The university bylaw No. (29) states that students with a GPA of less than 60% are placed under academic probation and are given an academic warning. During interviews, the Panel learned that at the beginning of each semester, the Registration Office forwards the names of students with a GPA of less than 60% to the respective head of department who, in turn, forwards these names to the academic advisor. The at-risk students are advised to register in courses that can raise their GPA or alternatively change their area of specialisation. The Panel was also informed that recently, the Social Counsellor met with these students in order to investigate the underlining reasons for their academic underachievement; copies of the Social Counselling follow-up forms for the academic year 2010-2011 were provided to the Panel. However, the Panel heard in different interviews with faculty members and students that at-risk students are not provided with formal support mechanisms, such as extra remedial tutoring or peer-tutoring. The Panel suggests that the University analyses the data obtained from the follow-up forms, in order to design suitable support mechanisms. The Panel also encourages the University to progress its work on the development of policies and procedures for the identification and support of at-risk students and to disseminate them to all students and faculty members.

A Social Counselling Office has been recently established and a Social Advisor appointed. The Panel was provided with a document outlining the action plan of the Social Counselling Office which includes the vision, mission and goals of the Office, as well as the services that it offers. The Panel also learned that the Social Advisor has conducted two presentations to

the staff and students relating to dealing with psychological stress and improving academic achievement. However, many of the students interviewed by the Panel were not aware of the Office or the services that it offers. The Panel encourages the University to improve its communication with the students in regards to its recently developed policies and support services.

3.6 Human Resources

3.6.1. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a formal recruitment policy and procedures that involve all relevant parties at different stages of the selection process.*

3.6.2. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University review its teaching load practice with a view to reducing its faculty member's academic load in line with international good practice, and develop a strategic workload plan to determine staffing needs for the future.*

3.6.3. *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a University-wide staff performance management plan that includes processes for performance evaluation of, and feedback to, individual staff members and which is linked with a detailed staff development plan.*

The University has developed a suite of Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures, one of which is the recruitment policy. These policies are in final draft awaiting the approval of the University Council. Reviewing the provided documents on recruitments activities in the years 2010 – 2012 revealed that while the recruitment of administrative staff followed a constructive and formal procedure, the recruitment processes followed when appointing academic staff varied from one appointment to another. The recruitment procedures at the moment require that the HR department collects all applicants CVs and directs them to the relevant department. Deans and Head of Departments (HoDs) are responsible for the shortlisting of applicants from the long list submitted by HR. However, the implemented process for short listing and final selection varied from one appointment to another. For example, while in some cases a formal interview was conducted by a committee selected and chaired by the University President, other candidates were appointed based on CVs and email communication only. The Panel urges the University to review its academic staff recruitment procedures to ensure the they are implemented coherently and systematically and that HR and HoDs are involved in the different stages of staff selection, including the interview sessions.

ASU has reduced the load of academics maintaining administration loads, through a presidential decision dated 13 December 2011, to six hours per week for Vice President and

Deans and nine hours per week for Deputy Deans and Heads of Department. Heads of Administration Units are expected to teach three hours less than their normal teaching load. Normal teaching load being 12 hours per week for professors, and 15 hours per week for associate and assistant professors and 18 hours per week for lecturers. All the above can take a maximum teaching overload of six hours per week for which they will be compensated; a practice, the Panel found to be commonly applied within the institution. Through interviews, different teaching staff indicated that they are expected to have a total workload of 48 hours per week which is the maximum allowed by Bahrain Labor Law and regulations, and that this should include teaching, scholarly and scientific research, students advising, administration assignments and community engagement activities. However, the University has not developed a formal workload policy indicating what is expected from different academic staff members in these regards. The Panel urges the University to develop a strategic workload plan to determine both academic and administration staffing in order to achieve the different goals and objectives of its recently approved Strategic Plan.

The Human Resource Department manages the implementation of the annual appraisal of administration staff. The appraisal form is brief and general and could benefit from expansion of its items to evaluate the staff members more relevantly with respect to their specific job descriptions. The University has revised its academic appraisal system. The new system includes self-appraisal and appraisal of Deans. The system has been implemented recently. Hence, it is premature to evaluate its effectiveness.

The Panel also saw evidence of staff members receiving training at other institutions on, for example, communication and presentation skills. Moreover, the University has pursued assistance from other bodies, such as Tamkeen, to develop career progress programmes for its administrative staff and a software system has been used very recently to conduct personal profile analysis for all its academic and administrative staff. All these activities are at very early stages of implementation.

The Faculty Members Development Centre is responsible for the training of faculty members. The Centre develops training plans and reports on their implementation to the Quality Assurance Committee. In preparing its annual plan, the Centre draws on training recommendations submitted by Deans and the Quality Assurance Committee and the results of the students' feedback. Most of these activities are facilitated by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit. However, external guests are also invited to conduct and deliver workshops and seminars. Most workshops are targeted at academic staff members. However, few are attended by administration staff members and students as well. Whilst the Panel is pleased to note the different professional development opportunities provided to the staff members, it encourages the University to expedite its plans, stated in its progress report, to 'develop a comprehensive performance management system' for ASU staff and faculty that imbeds staff performance appraisal and staff development plan to enable the University to achieve its strategic objective of having 'effective management of human resources'.

3.7 Infrastructure, Physical and Other Resources

3.7.1.   *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop a detailed and clearly written plan on the objectives, projected capacities and functionalities of the new campus with a clear time line to commence with the finalisation of the plans and building of the new campus.*

3.7.2.   *HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a copyright policy that enables students to make use of photocopying facilities while safeguarding the copyright of textbooks used within its campus.*

3.7.3.   *HERU recommends that Applied Science University benchmark the adequacy of its library resources with other institutions of similar size and type.*

3.7.4.   *HERU recommends that Applied Science University ensure the availability of access to the Library during the full announced working hours of the Library so that it is adequate for all its students including evening and weekend students.*

The Panel visited the new proposed University Campus at Al-Eker and saw the new land that has been purchased for the project. The University also submitted all drawings and building permits. Whilst the strategic plan indicates the different steps needed for the building of the new campus, clear time lines have still to be developed.

ASU developed a copyright policy for photocopying, printing and publishing text books. However, during interviews with students the Panel learned that students can still photocopy reference books in the library without any supervision from the University. The Panel urges the University to develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the implementation of the copyright policy.

An external assessment of the university's library was conducted in December 2011. This provides a general assessment about the quality of the library provision and recommends that space be extended to cater for the large number of students. The document does not benchmark the adequacy of its library resources with other institutions of similar size and type. The Panel encourages the University to benchmark its library against other university libraries in the region.

The library opening hours have been extended: 8 am till 8 pm Sunday - Friday, and 2 pm until 8 pm on Saturdays. Students interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with the current working hours of the library.

3.8 Research

3.8.1.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement a set of rigorous criteria based on international good practice to assure the quality of the text books published by the University.

3.8.2.   HERU recommends that Applied Science University develop and implement an overarching and realistic approach to research and its development.

3.8.3.   HERU recommend that Applied Science University develop and implement a set of criteria and standards to be used for the selection and roles of supervisors, external and internal examiners of theses, and to benchmark appropriately the standards of theses works and written presentations.

ASU has developed and recently implemented a new procedure to assure the quality of textbooks it publishes. The new procedure requires a request for a textbook publication to go through a series of evaluation stages starting from the department to which the faculty member belongs and ending with a peer review by subject experts to ensure its suitability for publication. The textbook is accepted for publication only if it passes all the evaluation stages. The procedure was implemented recently, therefore its effectiveness could not be assessed at the time of the site visit.

Progress related to the development and implementation of a realistic approach to research and its development has been postponed by ASU. According to the submitted improvement plan this recommendation's timeline was the end of 2011, but according to ASU's more recent progress report this recommendation will be addressed by the end of the academic year 2012-2013 and completed by the end of the academic year 2013-2014. During the site visit the Panel was informed that the University has appointed an acting dean for scientific research, who is also the Director of the newly to be developed Quality Assurance Centre. The Panel urges the institution to expedite the development and implementation of their research plans and ensure the availability of the necessary resources.

As stated earlier, ASU sought the help of a consultant for the development of its master course assessment policies and procedures who made recommendations for improvements based on analysing ASU's existing practice compared with international good practice. As a result ASU has recently developed its rules and regulations governing higher studies including the selection and roles of supervisors, and external and internal examiners of theses. A few samples of recent assessment documents showed that ASU implemented some of the recommendations, but other recommendations were not incorporated though they are based on international good practice, and ensure appropriate and thorough assessment of the set intended learning outcomes. The Panel encourages ASU to revise its dissertation policies, practices, and assessment in light of the recommendations.

3.9 Community Engagement

3.9.1. HERU recommends that Applied Science University define the community it intends to serve, then develop and implement a community engagement policy in relation to its commitment towards Bahraini society pursuant to the University's Mission.

ASU regularly organises activities to interact with the community such as, industrial site visits, participation in educational exhibitions, organising career day exhibitions for it students in which public and private sector industries are invited to contribute in, visits to local community, and social activities. However, the University has not yet established a formal definition of community engagement nor has a policy been developed and thereby implemented. In its strategic plan the time frame for the completion of these issues is summer 2012.