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

Directorate of
Higher Education Reviews
Institutional Review Report

Kingdom University
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 24 – 28 February 2019
HI011-C2-R003

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Acronyms

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre
ARD	Admission and Registration Department
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BoT	Board of Trustees
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CTLAC	College Teaching, Learning, Student Assessment and Moderation Committee
CQAC	College Quality Assurance Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
IAU	Institutional Assessment Unit
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KU	Kingdom University
LMS	Learning Management System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PDCA	Plan, Do, Check, Act
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA & E	Quality Assurance and Enhancement
QMS	Quality Management System
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SGC	Student Grievance Committee
SIS	Student Information System

SPAGU	Strategic Planning and Governance Unit
SSC	Student Support Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference
UC	University Council
UPRDC	University Programme Review and Development Committee
UQAC	University Quality Assurance Committee
UC-SPPC	University Strategy, Policy and Planning Committee
UC-TLAM	University Teaching, Learning, Student Assessment and Moderation Committee
VP	Vice President

I.   Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews where the whole institution is assessed; and Programme Reviews where the quality of learning and academic standards is judged in specific programmes. The DHR completed the first cycle of institutional reviews in 2013, and the second cycle is scheduled for 2018-2019, in accordance with the Institutional Quality Reviews Framework (Cycle 2) approved by the Cabinet (Resolution No. 38 of 2015). The main objectives of the institutional reviews are:

1. To enhance the quality of higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain by conducting reviews to assess the performance of the HEIs operating in the Kingdom, against a predefined set of Indicators and provide a summative judgment while identifying areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
2. To ensure that there is public accountability of higher education providers through the provision of an objective assessment of the quality of each provider, which produces published reports and summative judgements for the use of parents, students, and the Higher Education Council (HEC), and other relevant bodies.
3. To identify good practice where it exists and disseminate it throughout the Bahraini higher education sector.

The institutional review process will assess the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance arrangements against a pre-defined set of standards and indicators, and identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. Each Indicator will have a judgement; i.e. 'addressed' or 'not addressed', which collectively will lead to a Standard's judgement. A Standard will be given a judgement of 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed' depending on the number of indicators 'addressed' within a Standard, as detailed in the Institutional Quality Reviews Framework (Cycle 2). The aggregate of Standards' judgements will lead to an overarching judgement – 'meets quality assurance requirements', 'emerging quality assurance requirements', 'does not meet quality assurance requirements', as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Overall Judgements

Judgement	Description
Meets quality assurance requirements	The institution must address all eight Standards
Emerging quality assurance requirements	The institution must address a minimum of five Standards including Standards 1, 4 and 6 with the remaining Standards being at least partially satisfied.
Does not meet quality assurance requirements	The institution does not address any of the above two overall judgements

II.   The Institution Profile

Institution Name	Kingdom University
Type of the Institution	Private University
Year of Establishment	2001
Institution Approval Number	(07-1633), March 2001
Location	Riffa, Kingdom of Bahrain
Number of Colleges	3
Names of Colleges	1.College of Architecture Engineering and Design 2.College of Business Administration 3.College of Law
Number of Bachelor Qualifications	1. Bachelor of Science in Business Management 2.Bachelor of Science in Finance and Accounting 3. Bachelor of Science in Finance and Banking. 4.Bachelor of Science in Architecture Engineering 5. Bachelor of Interior Design 6. Bachelor of Law
Number of Postgraduate Qualifications	N/A
Cross-Border Programme(s)	N/A
Number of Enrolled Current Students	740
Number of Graduates since inception	2143
Number of Academic Staff Members	48
Number of Administrative Staff Members	52
Previous Institutional Review Date	April 2010
Date of SER submission	15 November 2018
Date of Site Visit	24-28 February 2019

III. Judgment Summary

> **The Institution's Judgement: Meets QA requirements**

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgment
Standard 1	**Mission, Governance and Management**	**Addressed**
Indicator 1	Mission	Addressed
Indicator 2	Governance and Management	Addressed
Indicator 3	Strategic Plan	Addressed
Indicator 4	Organizational Structure	Addressed
Indicator 5	Management of Academic Standards:	Addressed
Indicator 6	Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education	Not Applicable
Standard 2	**Quality Assurance and Enhancement**	**Addressed**
Indicator 7	Quality Assurance	Addressed
Indicator 8	Benchmarking and Surveys	Addressed
Indicator 9	Security of Learner Records and Certification	Addressed
Standard 3	**Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure**	**Addressed**
Indicator 10	Learning Resources	Addressed
Indicator 11	ICT	Addressed
Indicator 12	Infrastructure	Addressed
Standard 4	**The Quality of Teaching and Learning**	**Addressed**
Indicator 13	Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes	Addressed
Indicator 14	Admissions	Addressed
Indicator 15	Introduction and Review of Programmes	Addressed

Indicator 16	Student Assessment and Moderation	Addressed
Indicator 17	The Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 18	Recognition of Prior Learning	Addressed
Indicator 19	Short courses	Not Applicable
Standard 5	**Student Support Services**	**Addressed**
Indicator 20	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 6	**Human Resources Management**	**Addressed**
Indicator 21	Human Resources	Addressed
Indicator 22	Staff Development	Addressed
Standard 7	**Research**	**Addressed**
Indicator 23	Research	Addressed
Indicator 24	Higher degrees with research	Not Applicable
Standard 8	**Community Engagement**	**Addressed**
Indicator 25	Community Engagement	Addressed

IV.   Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

Mission, Governance and Management

The institution has an appropriate mission statement that is translated into strategic and operational plans and has a well-established, effective governance and management system that enables structures to carry out their different responsibilities to achieve the mission.

Indicator 1: Mission

The institution has a clearly stated mission that reflects the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement of a higher education institution that is appropriate for the institutional type and the programmes qualifications offered.

Judgement: Addressed

Kingdom University (KU) has a mission statement which addresses the institution's formal and public declaration of its purposes. It is publicly displayed not only on KU's website, in the Bylaws, Student, Faculty and Employee Handbooks, but also on analogue and digital bulletin boards, as observed by the Panel while touring the premises. The mission is operationalised in KU's Strategic Plan 2017-2022 through its core values: (1) teamwork, (2) professionalism, (3) continuous improvement, (4) fairness, (5) contribution to society and economy and (6) integrity. The Panel acknowledges the values that are derived from the mission statement, and notes that the mission statement is appropriate for the programme qualifications offered, as it reflects the three core functions of any Higher Education Institution (HEI) operating in Bahrain. These are teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Furthermore, the University operates its programmes in line with its mission and the guidelines of the HEC on the National Higher Education Strategy.

KU's mission statement is approved by its central institutional bodies: The Board of Trustees (BoT) and the University Council (UC). Moreover, KU's mission is linked to Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, namely in sharing the values of competitiveness and fairness. Interviews confirmed that students, staff, industry and government sector representatives were involved in the shaping of the mission and its conversion into values and subsequently into measurable Strategic Dimensions. The Panel notes that in Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030, sustainability and innovation are prominent issues and since KU is actively involved in sustainability activities the Panel suggests to integrate this highly important issue into KU's set of values. Furthermore, since the academic disciplines of business and finance on the one hand and architecture and engineering as well as law on the other hand have quite diverging requirements; it is suggested that KU create more specific mission statements for the three colleges in order to promote their special virtues and profiles under the University umbrella. Overall, the Panel appreciates that

the mission is integrating disparate ideas of all stakeholders into a coherent proposition which gives guidance for new initiatives and future development choices.

The mission statement is regularly reviewed by the Policy and Strategy Committee and the Strategic Planning and Governance Unit (SPAGU), basically as a part of KU's five-year strategic planning process or even more often when required. Annual Strategic Plan Implementation Progress Reports are provided to these two entities on the basis of monthly Key Achievement Reports and bi-annual Progress Reports. As stated convincingly in the interviews with senior management and administrative staff, all internal and external stakeholders are involved in the review process of the mission. Reports—provided by the SPAGU—are based rigorously on an extensive number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and serve as a basis for discussion with the UC Executive Management Group. Strategic issues are handled with supreme priority in order to further develop and ensure high standards of academic and administrative effectiveness and efficiency. From interviews, the Panel learned that there are plans of national and international co-operation with several universities; yet, up until now, only in an informal manner. The Panel advises the University to handle this issue with priority, as it is essential to incorporate new and meaningful strategic perspectives in teaching, research and community involvement.

All in all, the Panel is satisfied that KU has developed a comprehensive mission that caters for its operations and programmes. Hence, this indictor is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 2: Governance and Management

The institution exhibits sound governance and management practices and financial management is linked with institutional planning in respect of its operations and the three core functions.

Judgement: Addressed

Roles and responsibilities of the BoT are clearly described in KU's Bylaws, particularly in the sections: formation, membership and terms of reference of the BoT. The BoT is manned by Saudi and Bahraini academic and business representatives. The interview disclosed a remarkably high degree of commitment of the members to the long-term success of the institution. The BoT members have in-depth knowledge of all pertinent developments and activities of KU and impart a positive spirit of dedication to the internal stakeholders, in particular to faculty and administrative staff. From interviews and minutes of meetings, the Panel learned that the BoT meets twice a year.

KU's BoT and the University Council have clearly separated duties on paper and in practice, as was confirmed in interviews with the Panel. Moreover, the president of KU is a member of both institutional bodies; their duties are transparently described in the Bylaws. The BoT focuses on strategic coherence and infrastructure provision, whereas the UC ensures the implementation of

all aspects of the core duties of the Institution. The senior management team and faculty members have distinct and clear duties which are shown in the submitted job descriptions. Interviews reassured the Panel that duties are well known and fully understood.

Procedures for the appointment and induction of members of the BoT are described in KU's Bylaws. The Panel was provided with attendance records and minutes of meetings which are kept by the BoT secretary.

KU's strategic goals are operationalized in its Annual Operational Plan document which shows a clear structural link between strategy and implementation. Financial decisions and resource allocations are thus firmly linked to the Strategic Plan. During the interviews, the Panel was informed that financial decisions are based on previous years' budgets and expenditures, former records, revenue expectations and extensive assessment reports. Furthermore, KU has decided to implement an Institutional Risk Management Framework to ensure good governance and strategic control on all management levels and respond to unforeseeable developments like for instance a high degree of competition amongst HEIs operating in Bahrain, as clarified during interviews.

KU's University Authority Matrix shows an approved structure for delegation of authorities for financial and management decisions along with existing departments. Strategic goals are operationalised in the Annual Operational Plans which are supervised and drafted by the SPAGU, approved by the UC and finally implemented by KU's Colleges, and by the Financial Affairs Department. Upon approval of the yearly budget, the budget figures are distributed through the Financial Management System to all relevant internal stakeholders. From interviews, the Panel learned that decision making processes are handled by the University's and Colleges' numerous standing and ad-hoc committees. All policies and regulations are approved by the BoT and the UC.

In order to detect and prevent fraudulent activities, KU has developed adequate manuals for the University Purchasing and Services Department and the Financial Affairs Department. These manuals were provided by KU during the site visit. From interviews, the Panel learned that an independent external audit agency was appointed three years back by the BoT to ensure transparency; the latest and up-to-date audit was conducted in October 2018. Interviews with senior management revealed that external audit agencies are subject to being changed in order to provide most reliable reports. The Panel appreciates that the University's business and finance systems are regularly being audited by an independent external agency in Bahrain.

Considering all the above mentioned, the Panel is satisfied with KU's governance and management structure which leads to defining the roles and responsibilities of each party. Therefore, this Indictor is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 3: Strategic Plan

There is a strategic plan, showing how the mission will be pursued, which is translated into operational plans that include key performance indicators and annual targets with respect to the three core functions with evidence that the plan is implemented and monitored.

Judgement: Addressed

KU's Strategic Plan 2017-2022, developed by the Strategic Steering Committee in 2016, is the follow-up of its predecessor, which covered the years from 2012 to 2017. Interviews distinctly indicated that the strategy was developed in a comprehensive iterative process with all relevant stakeholders: BoT, UC, senior executives, deans, heads of department, faculty, staff, Accreditation and Quality Assurance Office (AQAO) and students.

The Strategic Plan is presented in the format of tables and shows ten different Strategic Dimensions of which three are the core functions of universities: teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Annual targets are assessed accordingly, then translated into Action Plans whose fulfilment is attached to KPIs, as presented in the Detailed Master Strategic Plan 2017-2022, and as confirmed during the interviews on-site.

The Strategic Dimensions document correlates Action Plans with senior responsibility and process owners; it includes reporting lines, supporting evidence, financial specifications and risk levels, which makes it a feasible working tool. As stated in the SER, regular meetings initiated by the SPAGU with the process owners are meant to monitor the implementation of milestones in accordance with KU's strategic goals to emphasise continuous improvement. During the site visit interviews, the Panel found clear evidence of this rigorous monitoring process in order to comply with all given strategic aspects of KU. The SPAGU allocates senior responsibility—the University Council Executive Management Group—to all Strategic (Sub-)Dimensions and works together in close cooperation with the Institutional Assessment Unit (IAU) on regular comprehensive reports.

KU's Annual Operational Plans are the basis for more detailed planning instruments. As mentioned earlier, the SPAGU is coordinating and monitoring the implementation of activities of strategic relevance. Annual Operations Plans combine Strategic (Sub-) Dimensions with specific actions, key persons, achievement dates, financial means, supporting evidence and the level of risk involved. There are two yearly reporting dates: February and July for the academic and support units and February and August for the administrative unit. From the site visit interviews, the Panel learned that implementation of planned activities is the duty of Deans, Department Chairs as well as academic support and administrative units. However, during interview sessions, the Panel noted that many action plans were in place only for few months and that some process owners were new in their respective roles. The Panel recommends that newly appointed process owners make themselves quickly familiar with projected activities in the actual Annual Operational Plan.

Monitoring of the institutional progress is accomplished with a well-established and regular annual review process. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the SPAGU, along with the IAU collect and prepare KPIs data of the achievement of goals based on monthly status reports from the process owners of the respective operational plans, the implementing units and persons involved. Possible strategic changes—which are subject to be revised by the Strategy, Policy and Planning Committee—are handled within the guidelines of the Strategic Change Management Policy and Procedure.

The Panel is satisfied that KU's Strategic Plan has been developed through a comprehensive iterative process with the involvement of all relevant stakeholders. Hence, this Indictor is addressed.

Recommendation

- Newly appointed process owners make themselves quickly familiar with projected activities in the actual Annual Operational Plan.

Indicator 4: Organizational Structure

The institution has a clear organizational and management structure and there is student participation in decision-making where appropriate.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has a formal approved organisational structure and hierarchies as depicted in KU's organisational chart, University chart and College chart along with a description of functionalities and responsibilities. This structure was devised and implemented to give an overview of all relevant developments at University and college levels in order to provide a basis for internal discussions and informed decision-making to leadership and senior management. However, as discussed later in this indicator, the Panel expresses its concern with the large number of committees which leads to overlapping tasks and duties, and its potential waste of time and energy for all involved academic and administrative personnel, which could be better used for academic and research activities.

KU has devised and implemented an organisational structure to determine the workflow of institutional decision-making. Interviewed staff clarified that KU's structure is meant to give transparency and reliability to the information exchange at all levels of activities throughout the University. This structure is up-to-date, and is accessible publicly on KU's website, and internally on the SharePoint Portal (intranet), on University bulletin boards and display screens as well as in the staff induction material. From interviews, the Panel learned that the SharePoint Portal also provides up-to-date descriptions, purposes, functions and responsibilities of the numerous committees at College and University level. Moreover, Terms of Reference (ToR) of all committees were reviewed by the Panel during the site visit.

The Human Resources (HR) Department at KU prepares and provides detailed individual job descriptions. The Panel studied the Dean's and Chairperson's of the department job descriptions

and confirmed that both are clearly organized and transparent. Furthermore, task descriptions of a Course Co-ordinator and a Course Instructor are clearly documented. Interviews with faculty and administrative staff members revealed good understanding of their respective roles and duties as well as of the different organisational interconnections and communication lines.

The BoT is mainly manned with external members from industry and thus represents the most important catalyst for strategic decisions. The University Industry Advisory Board and two College Advisory Boards—one for the College of Business Administration, another one for the College of Architecture, Engineering and Design—are manned with external members from industry. However, the Advisory Board for the College of Law is in the process to be formed. Interviews with Advisory Board members confirmed the influence they are able to exert in academic and professional matters, which is acknowledged by the Panel.

From interviews, the Panel notes that KU has a system of centralised and decentralised committees as it invites all stakeholders to bring forward issues of importance or concerns to be discussed in these committees to facilitate decision-making processes. With respect to students' involvement in committees, there is no clear picture on how student initiatives and proposals find their way into College and University decisions. The submitted evidence shows the participation of one student in the central Quality Assurance Committee. Consequently, the Panel recommends that KU allow and encourage more permanent student presence in all relevant college committees, as students are one of the most important stakeholders who will bring a user-centred perspective to relevant issues.

As mentioned earlier, standing and ad-hoc committees have clearly denominated terms of reference, processes, procedures and reporting requirements. An integral part of all committee descriptions is 'evaluation and regular review intervals', which is conducted annually or bi-yearly or as required by the Strategy, Policy and Planning Committee.

The KU's overall organisational structure is reviewed every four years. The Panel observed that the actual committee structure of KU is too fragmented. According to KU's Bylaws the University has 11 standing committees at university level, while in fact there are at least 15 in existence. Furthermore, the Panel learned about 46 Standing College Committees plus numerous ad-hoc committees. The Panel also notes that the current committee structure allows overlapping duties, and requires the attendance of many staff and faculty members. The Panel is of the view that this reduces effectiveness and efficiency, and prevents lean and more agile procedures and decisions. Just one example to make this observation by the Panel more tangible: it appears gratuitous to have—just at the college level—a Student Grievance Committee (SGC) on the one hand and on the other hand a Student Support Committee (SSC). Both committees have quite similar purposes and duties like the 'improvement of College student experience' which comes under SSC and the promotion of an unprejudiced College educational environment which is dealt with at SGC. To support the above remark, from interviews with academic staff members and students, the Panel learned that some student grievances are processed within their respective departments. Although there is a working organisational structure in the institution's committees; yet the Panel recommends its revision so decisions can be more efficient and less time-consuming. All in all, the Panel concludes that KU's management structure is clear and known by all its stakeholders. Therefore, this indictor is addressed.

Recommendations

- Allow and encourage more permanent student presence in all relevant college committees.
- Streamline the structure and duties of the committees at university and college levels, in order to enhance effectiveness and speed implementation of the taken measures.

Indicator 5: Management of Academic Standards

The institution demonstrates a strong concern for the maintenance of academic standards and emphasizes academic integrity throughout its teaching and research activities.

Judgement: Addressed

In line with KU's values (professionalism) and (continuous improvement) of the mission statement, the University has introduced an Institutional Strategic Academic and Review Framework which includes a Strategic Academic Plan and a Strategic Research Plan— along with a five-year Operation Plan.

The Institutional Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure and Research Policy and Procedures clearly outline the roles and duties of Course Instructors, Course Co-ordinators, Chairpersons, Deans and senior management. From interviews, the Panel was informed that these academic standards are supported by an Assessment and Moderation Policy, a Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy, a Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QA&E) Policy, a central and comprehensive Institutional Assessment Policy and Procedure, and a Research Policy.

KU's core value of integrity is addressed in the Institutional Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedure, the Research Policy and the Employee Code of Conduct. The Panel appreciates that KU's Academic Plan promotes a student-centred teaching approach and identifies graduate attributes as exemplified in KU's colleges. The Plan of the colleges is detailed and shows key objectives and actions and provides a reliable oversight of academic standards to the BoT. The Panel notes that the performance measurement indicators in the plan are suitable to give an oversight of academic achievements of KU as a whole and through graduate attributes for the individual colleges as well. Members of the BoT follow KU's academic progress actively and with great scrutiny, as the Panel learned during the interviews.

The University Disciplinary Policy deals with academic misconduct by staff in the Employee Handbook. These cases are handled by the University Misconduct Committee and the University Misconduct Appeal Committee. Academic misconduct of students is clarified in the Student Handbook. Academic misconduct cases for students and staff are handled in separate committees in a clear and transparent manner. From interviews, the Panel learned that for students' cases there is a two-level hierarchy: first the College Discipline Committee and for more serious issues the University Discipline Students Committee. The Panel confirmed in interviews that students as well as staff have a clear understanding of how issues of misconduct are processed.

KU's Strategic Dimensions document comprises complaints, grievances and appeals. In its capacity to treat academic appeals transparently, the Panel acknowledges that the Assessment Appeal Procedure describes responsibilities and gives procedural details in cases of students' appeals and grievances. From interviews conducted during the site visit, it was evident to the Panel that non-academic as well as academic issues of guidance and concerns are handled firstly by the Student Affairs Department and then, if necessary, by the College Student Grievance Committee. All such instances are regulated by the Student Support and Guidance Policy and Procedure. The Panel notes that KU's procedures of dealing with complaints and grievances from students are transparent and fair. Interviews indicated that most problems were resolved in a serious manner. The given evidence shows earnest examination and resolution efforts, which is appreciated by the Panel.

Considering all the above mentioned, the Panel acknowledges that KU has a range of mechanisms to ensure that the academic standards are maintained across its colleges. Hence, this Indictor is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 6: Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education (where applicable)

The relationship between the institution operating in Bahrain and other higher education institutions is formalized and explained clearly, so that there is no possibility of students or other stakeholders being misled.

Judgement: Not Applicable

The Panel was informed during the interviews about plans of formal national and international co-operation with other universities. The Panel encourages KU to develop a long-term plan for formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) with other universities. The Panel is of the view that further national and cross-border collaboration through binding agreements will be fruitful for KU's institutional development.

Recommendation

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 1: Mission, Governance and Management

Standard 2

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

There is a robust quality assurance system that ensures the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements of the institution as well as the integrity of the institution in all aspects of its academic and administrative operations.

Indicator 7: Quality Assurance

The institution has defined its approach to quality assurance and effectiveness thereof and has quality assurance arrangements in place for managing the quality of all aspects of education provision and administration across the institution.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has a clear Quality Assurance Management System, which is implemented *via* the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre (AQAC), staffed by a Director, a Senior Specialist and two Administrators. The Centre works with the University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC) and the College Quality Assurance Committees (CQACs) to implement the Quality Management System (QMS) effectively across KU. From the conducted interviews, the Panel learned that information on policies, procedures, regulations, and quality assurance management system is available *via* Faculty Handbook, Human Resource Manual and intranet.

KU's QA&E Policy defines the structure and roles of each party. Moreover, the policy identifies eight roles of the AQAC, 16 roles of the UQAC, and 19 roles of the CAQCs. The SER refers to a professional audit firm appointed by the BoT to audit the administrative department. Although the QA&E Policy makes no reference to external audits; yet, on site, the Panel was provided with evidence that documents the process and outcomes of appointing a professional audit firm to audit the administrative departments. During the interviews, the Panel learned that this has been the practice for several years, and it does not stem from any doubts of internal audits or AQAC; rather, it aims at managing risks, especially concerning finance.

The QMS implementation process is detailed in the SER. The AQAC initiates, monitors and follows up the process to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. To implement the QMS, the Director of AQAC prepares a list of internal auditors which is renewed every two years, and approved by the President. Internal audit is conducted annually, and the supporting materials depict a vivid picture of this process in 2016-2017, from forming internal audit groups and scheduling duties, to the audit checklist which includes relevant HEC resolutions, key indicators of HEC Institutional Accreditation and the previous audit reports. During the interviews, it was clear that the internal audit reports reflect the auditors' independent opinions and provide many examples on addressing their comments over the last five years (2013-2018).

The internal audit report includes observations, compliance (full, partial or none), rate of concern (high, medium or low), and recommendations. Based on it, the auditee makes an improvement

plan to indicate the proposed actions, person responsible and expected completion date for each recommendation in the audit report. Finally, the AQAC representative completes the progress report, indicating the status of proposed actions (done, partially done, not done), evidence of successful implementation (if done or partially done). The Panel is satisfied with the provided evidence of the implementation of some of the proposed actions.

The responsibility for implementing the QA&E policy is shared amongst all KU staff. The Policy defines the duties of academic management at university, college and department levels; administrative support management; academic staff; administrative support staff; and the IAU of the AQAC. Moreover, the Panel found that the University Strategy, Policy and Planning Committee (UC-SPPC) and the University Programme Review and Development Committee (UPRDC) play a vital role in implementing the QA&E policy and enhancing the QMS. The Panel appreciates that KU has a clear quality assurance management system in place.

The Panel notes that KU's policies, procedures and bylaws are clearly articulated to cover the three core functions of any higher education institution in Bahrain. For example, the QA&E Policy is comprehensive and articulates the key principles, quality criteria, academic planning and governance, internal and external reference points, benchmarks, staff development and welfare, in addition to the use of the QMS in teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

Moreover, the Teaching and Learning Policy and Procedures define the teaching and learning opportunities, principles, resources, strategies, responsibilities, planning, implementation, review and evaluation. Furthermore, to ensure the application of policy and procedure, the QA&E Policy articulates the use of QMS in research, teaching and learning, academic programme design, approval and review, course management, assessment and moderation, and feedback from students and stakeholders. In addition, the Research Policy and Procedures define the research principles, ethics, intellectual property, financing, responsibilities, priorities and cycle, as well as the approvals for attending conferences and seminars, publishing incentives and research grants. Furthermore, the Community Engagement Policy and Procedure, and the QA&E Policy articulate the use of QMS in community engagement and evidence was provided on KU's application of these activities.

According to Article 29C of the Bylaws, the University's organizational structure and bylaws are reviewed every four years or when it is necessary. From interviews with staff members, the Panel was informed about the process of creating and revising policies, procedures and other controlled documents. Moreover, the Panel learned that the bylaws were reviewed in 2018, and it was noted that the process of this review was clearly documented and contained the decree of establishing the University, minutes of five meetings of the Bylaws Review Committee, as well as the University Council meeting that approved the outcomes. From interviews, the Panel learned that policies are reviewed every three years, whereas procedures are reviewed after one year or when required or needed. The Panel acknowledges that the process of reviewing policies, procedures and bylaws is organized and well documented.

From interviews, the Panel learned that KU adheres to the HEC regulations with respect to licensing its academic programmes *via* AQAC and its internal audit team during which an annual internal audit is conducted to ensure compliance with the HEC regulations.

The staff's understanding of QA role can be inferred from the AQAC Service Quality Evaluation Surveys in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. However, these surveys and the interviews reveal that staff understand quality assurance as a matter of compliance, not enhancement. Therefore, the Panel advises that KU expand staff's understanding of quality assurance beyond compliance to include enhancement.

The Panel concludes that KU has established a comprehensive quality assurance system to ensure the quality of its programme offerings along with the required support services. Therefore, the Panel considers this Indicator as addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 8: Benchmarking and Surveys

Benchmarking and surveys take place on a regular basis; the results of which inform planning, decision-making and enhancement.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has a clear benchmarking policy and procedures. It includes benchmarking key principles, policy directions, activities, partners' selection, standards, process, and responsibilities. Moreover, the policy includes a certain PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) framework as a significant guide for benchmarking activities, with both internal and external inputs. The Benchmarking Procedures clearly identify seven phases of the benchmarking process. From interviews, the Panel was informed that informal benchmarking has been conducted by using publicly available data or information that the selected universities publish on their websites. Selection of universities is based on certain criteria. In practice, informal benchmarking was conducted against local, regional and international institutions. This was confirmed during the interviews. Furthermore, KU conducted benchmarks for core institutional activities. For example, KU benchmarked for ICT in 2016-17, using both a survey and a comparison with a regional university. Library activities were also benchmarked in 2016 based on a survey and a comparison with four institutions. In addition, KU benchmarks for core programme activities. For example, the Architecture Engineering and Interior Design programmes conducted a benchmarking exercise regarding entry requirements against local universities in Bahrain in June 2018.

KU is aware of the limits of this Internet-based method and has begun the process of engaging universities through MoUs. Therefore, The Review and Accreditation Steering Committee proposed in 2018-2019 a plan to establish MoUs with several local, regional, and international universities. These to-be partners have specifically comparable programmes and courses. Interviewed staff members confirmed that the MoUs are in the final stage. Although no such

cooperation exists yet, the Panel acknowledges KU's efforts to seek benchmarking partners; and encourages KU to expedite the approval of its MoUs from the concerned parties.

The Panel found that most of the informal benchmarking reports made recommendations, such as requests of minor course changes in the Business Management programme's annual review, requests of major curriculum changes in the Department of Architecture Engineering submitted to the UPRDC; increase the learning resources; and improvements in the B.Sc. programme in Architecture Engineering. Interviews confirmed that the informal benchmarking had impacts on reviewing existing programmes and proposing new ones. Accordingly, certain aspects of existing programmes were dropped, developed or added. An example repeatedly mentioned is the BA in Law. Considering all the above mentioned, it is recommended that KU expedite the implementation of its rigour and comprehensive plan to formalize the benchmarking activities.

KU conducts eleven types of periodical surveys, and several improvements were brought about as a result of students and staff surveys. In its most recent annual report, the IAU discusses major results of 71 surveys conducted, analysed and disseminated to the respected stakeholders in the academic year 2017-2018. The Panel learned from interviews that student satisfaction surveys are conducted by colleges at the end of the academic year, while alumni/graduate tracking surveys and employer satisfaction surveys are conducted every three years, sometimes by an external agency. A new College Industry Advisory Council Survey was conducted by the IAU in 2018, followed by an action plan that includes modifications of course contents offered by the College of Architecture Engineering & Design to meet the external stakeholders' expectations. The Panel notes that in addition to a section on library services in the annual Student Satisfaction Survey, a library survey (LIBQUAL+) is conducted every three years, and the library sometimes conducts its own student satisfaction surveys. A Student Survey on quality of IT services, an Employee Satisfaction Survey on the HR Services, and a Survey on the Services of AQAC was also conducted in 2018.

From interviews, the Panel was informed that after each survey, and based on its respondents' comments and recommendations, an improvement plan is prepared. The IAU and representatives of the concerned college meet twice to discuss and assess the progress of the implementation of the improvement plan. The Panel notes that the proposed actions that are not implemented are carried forward to the following year. The Panel found evidence that pending actions proposed in recent surveys or improvement plans were implemented during the following years. All in all, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator has been addressed.

Recommendation

- Expedite the implementation of the university's rigorous and comprehensive plan to formalize the benchmarking activities.

Indicator 9: Security of Learner Records and Certification

Formalized arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records and certification which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has an elaborate and effective student administration and academic record system. The Panel found its Student Information System (SIS) complying with its Records Retention and Disposal Policy. Accordingly, all student academic and administration documents and records are subject to retention, securely stored, and disposed physically and electronically when the retention period ends. From interviews, the Panel notes that there is a clear implemented process for accurately entering and verifying data on grades and enrolment, and electronic records are backed up regularly as per the ICT back-up policy and procedures. With respect to enrolment, a potential student submits an application form and attaches the required documents. An Admission Specialist reviews the documents and inserts the application form details in the Student Profile Screen. The head of ARD reviews the inserted data and student documents and signs off the application form. The Student Admission and Recruitment Committee reviews the inserted data and student documents and either accepts or rejects the applicant. If accepted, a student unified file is prepared and sent to the HEC for review and approval. Upon approval, a student ID from the HEC is issued. As for grades, interviewed academic staff members clarified that the course instructor enters the final grades into the Student Self-Services portal (Edu-Gate) and submits a signed hard copy to the academic department's chair who verifies and approves the final grades and submits them to the college dean for final approval.

The Panel verified that KU preserves the integrity of student records. Each student has a unified file in the SIS as a hard copy that includes the following documents: admission form, approved unified file from the HEC, Student Analysis Plan, Student Schedule per semester, Student Transcript, Academic Advising Form per semester, Academic Transaction, Academic Warning Letter per semester (if any), Appeal and Deferred Change Grade form, Expected-to-Graduate Form and University Council Resolution (if any).

The Panel also found that KU has a provision to preserve confidentiality and protect against unauthorized or improper use of documents. Security, privacy and confidentiality requirements are listed in KU Archiving Procedure. When touring the facilities, the Panel notes that student records are stored in locked cabinets in an archive room which has limited access. Every assessment is securely stored in the department till the time of its administration. Then, the course instructor ensures its secure storage according to the Records Retention and Disposal Policy. Furthermore, the University's official sealed envelopes are used in major examinations.

The Panel verified that KU has effective mechanisms to ensure and maintain the safety of the process of certificates issuance, and its certificates are protected against fraud. Original certificates are issued only once, and the issuing of a duplicate certificate follows the same procedures of the original. Hard copies of student certificates are preserved indefinitely. Soft

copies of student academic records are maintained on the KU's SIS which is backed up every night to ensure security of information.

The Panel notes that KU also has effective mechanisms to ensure and maintain the integrity of the process of certificates issuance. The Registration Officer prints out and organizes the Expected to Graduate Report from the IT system for all students expected to graduate within the graduation semester, and doublechecks the documents in the Student Academic Record to ensure completeness in light of any updated HEC requirements.

From interviews, the Panel learned that each policy or procedure documents its revision history and schedules of its next review after three years for policies and one year for procedures, or when required or needed. The Records Retention and Disposal Policy was exceptionally scheduled for a review after one year. The Panel is satisfied with KU's arrangements when revising the related policies and procedures and agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Standard 3

Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

The institution has appropriate and sufficient learning resources, ICT and physical infrastructure to function effectively as a HEI, and which support the academic and administrative operations of the institution.

Indicator 10: Learning Resources

The institution provides sustained access to sufficient information and learning resources to achieve its mission and fully support all of its academic programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

From the Self-Evaluation Report and site visit tour, the Panel observed that KU has a library that consists of books, Journals, databases, reading area, study area, book display area, periodical section, printer, photocopy machines, master's theses along with online resources to cater for the programmes offered. In addition to providing support for students when working on their assignments or projects and helping staff members when conducting research.

From the site visit, the Panel notes that the library collection of print/ e-resources/ journals is considered to be adequate for the programmes offered and are easy to access by all parties. Also, the services of users with special learning needs and disabilities are outlined in the SER though not in use as there are no special needs students enrolled at present in KU's programmes. The Panel learned from students and staff interviews that the facilities of the library are suitable and effective to serve the needs of both of them.

During interviews, the Panel was informed that there is a Library Committee along with UPRDC and both are responsible for mapping the learning requirements of each programme with its required learning resources. The ToRs of the committees together with the minutes of the meetings evidenced the mapping of the library resources with KU's programme needs.

The LIBQUAL+ survey was launched in 2016 and has been adopted as a benchmark tool to compare KU's library facilities and services with similar libraries as clarified in the SER. From interviews, the Panel learned that the adequacy of the library and its information resources were benchmarked every three years through comparison with other international institutions of a similar profile. The results of the survey have been utilized by KU to produce an improvement plan to enhance library and its services.

The library induction sessions are held for students and faculty at the beginning of each semester on a regular basis and when needed to orient new students and staff with the information literacy, resources available in the library and its effective usage. The Panel's interviews with students, alumni and staff members further reinforced this aspect; and all parties clarified that the library provides them with all their requirements; and even when they need a resource that is not available, the librarian requests it for them *via* interlibrary loan. Furthermore, during interview sessions the Panel was informed that periodic training is done on databases and library

resources for existing/current students and staff. Moreover, student and staff satisfaction surveys are conducted each semester to evaluate the adequacy and quality of KU's learning resources. In addition, an annual survey is conducted to elicit students and staff feedback, suggestions or recommendations on KU's library in order to enhance and improve its services. The Panel was provided with an improvement plan which was based on the annual survey feedback; and as a result of this improvement plan, the total printed/hardcopy collection was increased in 2016-17. The Panel appreciates that the library's learning resources at KU are adequate and are well managed by the library. The Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed and suggests that KU join a Consortium about databases with other private universities in Bahrain to further enhance the library resources.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 11: ICT

The institution provides coordinated ICT resources for the effective support of student learning.

Judgement: Addressed

The Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Department at KU has well-defined roles and responsibilities which are well- documented in the ICT Manual and clarified in the submitted diagram during the site visit. From interviews, the Panel learned that the Operational Plan of the ICT Department is based on Dimension number 7, Initiative 2 of KU's Strategic plan 2017-2022. The responsibilities of the ICT Department are clearly documented in the SER and in ICT utilization reports and inventory list.

The job description of each one at the ICT Department has been provided to the Panel during the site visit. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the ICT Department falls under the supervision of the Vice President (VP) for Administrative Affairs. It is worth noting that the IT Help Desk - that is widely utilized by students and staff- comes under the ICT Department. During the site visit, the Panel studied ICT's Operational Plan and noted that the SPAGU and AQAC monitor and revise its implementation. The Panel also confirmed that the ICT Department has an effective disaster recovery and maintenance plans and a good system to replace KU's physical resources.

From interviews, the Panel learned that the ICT Department provides academic and administrative facilities for students and staff depending on their needs. There is a Learning Management System (LMS) to support students learning by placing all the requirements of their courses and the relevant materials on it. Moreover, 'Turnitin' is available *via* LMS to enable students to check their work against plagiarism before submitting their assignments or projects. Staff, on the other hand, use 'Turnitin' to detect students' plagiarised work and check the percentage of similarity. Students also use Edu-Gate for online registration, online payment, viewing their attendance record, transcript, exam schedules and final grades. From interviews,

the Panel also learned that there is a SIS and Online SharePoint which are used by staff for administrative purposes. Furthermore, KU's website is available in Arabic and English to ensure a better reach of information. Furthermore, the Panel notes that there are up-to-date registers showing the provision of ICT services, including the availability of sufficient hardware and software for students and staff as well as the availability of ICT training sessions for both.

The student and staff satisfaction surveys are conducted on a regular basis to monitor the effectiveness of ICT services and its provided support. In addition, informal benchmarking was conducted with two local universities. The findings of these annual surveys and benchmarking have led to specific improvement goals and were documented in the provided evidence and confirmed during interviews with ICT staff, students and faculty members. The Panel appreciates that KU elicits staff and student feedback with respect to the ICT services and implements the required improvements.

The Institution uses its information systems to record and provide reports for both senior management and academic staff in order to plan effectively and take actions in due time. There are two kinds of reports, namely the ICT facilities report and LMS reports. The Panel studied the latter which was for 2017-2018 and noted that it clearly outlined the issues faced and suggestions for improvements for the next academic year. The Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed and acknowledges the efforts of the ICT Department in supporting KU's management decisions and in enhancing the teaching and learning environment of the institution.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 12: Infrastructure

The institution provides physical infrastructure that is safe and demonstrably adequate for the conduct of its academic programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has an ICT Register of physical resources such as classes, rooms, architecture laboratories, studios and library equipment along with ICT equipment. From interviews, the Panel was informed that there is an operational plan for KU's infrastructure. The Panel notes that maintenance jobs are identified and scheduled on a weekly basis and followed up by the concerned parties. Furthermore, the Purchasing and Services Department policies and procedures confirm the presence of an Asset Management System in the University. From interviews and touring the facilities, the Panel notes that the ICT Department is working on implementing its current Disaster Recovery Plan, core system enhancement and the extension of ICT infrastructure to the new academic building including the relocation of Data Centre to the new building. The Panel acknowledges the efforts taken by the ICT Department in handling KU's infrastructure requirements.

There are registers showing the classrooms, laboratories, studios workshops for teaching with the capacity to accommodate 15-20 students along with offices for faculty and administrative staff. The existence of all the above mentioned was confirmed during the Panel's tour. However, the Panel notes that currently there are 740 students in KU and the present available infrastructure in terms of classrooms and laboratories, studios is limited. Nonetheless, when touring the University, it was evident that the new building that was ready (awaiting Civil Defence approval) will provide the students and staff with ample space and facilities like big classrooms, studios, more and large faculty offices, spacious library for activities related to teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

KU has a well-documented policy and procedure on Occupational Health and Safety which was introduced in 2018. From interviews, the Panel learned that it complies with the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain. On touring the facilities, the Panel found that KU's clinic is well equipped and managed by a nurse to deal with any medical issues during working hours. From interviews, the Panel learned that emergency cases are arranged to be handled by a nearby hospital; and students can approach the same hospital after the working hours of the clinic.

The student satisfaction surveys on purchasing and services are conducted by the Institutional Measurement Unit on an annual basis to evaluate the availability and suitability of infrastructure resources. These include satisfaction with University environment, health and safety, parking space, cafeteria services etc. The Panel also learned about the annual staff satisfaction survey which is conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of Purchasing and Services Department. The Panel found that follow up actions are taken by this department to deal with specific points of dissatisfaction. For example, in the last three years, students were not satisfied with the variety of food and KU has taken certain measures by contacting more caterers and providing a mobile coffee shop. Furthermore, based on the SER and touring the facilities, the Panel noted that the new buildings will enhance the infrastructure by assuring a secured car parking, more classrooms, additional laboratories and studios, etc. Hence the Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 3: Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

The Quality of Teaching and Learning

The institution has a comprehensive academic planning system with a clear management structure and processes in place to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning programmes and their delivery.

Indicator 13: Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes

There are effective mechanisms to ensure the quality of teaching and learning provision across the institution.

Judgement: Addressed

A key dimension of KU's Institutional Strategic Plan 2017– 2022 relating to teaching and learning is 'to ensure that programmes offered by KU are relevant and are regularly updated with latest industry and international inputs'. To this realisation, KU has instituted a clear Academic Planning Framework, as part of its Institutional Strategic Planning and Review Policy, which requires each college to develop a College Academic Plan to manage its academic planning process. During interviews with the senior academic staff, the Panel learned that the colleges also prepare Annual College Operational Plans, with action plans, KPIs and targets, and assigned responsibilities.

The SER states that the College Academic Plans are implemented and monitored by the College Deans and relevant Departmental Heads, under the supervision and guidance of the VP for Academic Affairs and Scientific Research. The Panel learned during interviews that each college has a formal and appropriate internal management and governance structure, with clear roles and responsibilities; and was provided with some samples of College Operational Plans. The Panel is satisfied that the existing arrangements are sufficient to ensure consistency with the institutional management and governance of academic planning.

The SER states that the teaching and learning framework of the colleges is guided by a Teaching and Learning Policy and a Teaching and Learning Procedure. The Panel interviewed a range of stakeholders, including students, alumni and academic staff, and confirmed that the teaching and learning approach across the Colleges is 'learner-centred'. The range of teaching and learning methods employed include lectures, seminars, group discussion, studio-based teaching and supervised projects, practical workshops, site visits, and resource-based learning. Interviewed students confirmed the use of these methods and expressed their satisfaction with the delivery of their courses. The Panel is satisfied that KU's 'learner-centred' approach to teaching and learning, together with the wide range of teaching methods, encourage students to participate actively in classes and also develop their skills in self-learning.

The SER clarified that KU has a mandatory work-based learning component, in the form of industrial training, for all its programmes, which is aimed at 'exposing students to the real work environment and providing hands-on experience for students'. Sample course files reviewed during the site visit and interviews with the industrial training and career guidance staff, employers and alumni showed that there are clear arrangements in place for industrial training, including appropriate pre-requisites, course credits and tuition hours required, along with suitable assessment methods. Interviewed employers and alumni also expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements that have been put in place for placing students on the suitable and relevant internship training. The Panel appreciates KU's clear arrangements with respect to its industrial training programmes.

The Panel confirmed during interviews with those involved in the academic management of the programmes that the College Academic Plans are reviewed and updated on an annual basis by the Strategy, Policy and Planning Committee, in accordance with the requirements of the Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy and Programme Review Procedure. All in all, the Panel appreciates the systematic approach to academic planning, and the implementation of an effective academic planning and monitoring system which ensure consistent arrangements across colleges, and alignment of College Academic Plans with the Institutional Strategic Plan. Hence, the Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 14: Admissions

The institution has appropriate and rigorously enforced admission criteria for all its programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has a University Admission Policy and a University Admission Procedure that are in line with the HEC admission requirements. The Admission and Registration Department (ARD) is responsible for managing admissions to all programmes.

Interviews with students and alumni confirmed that information on the admission is always made available to current and prospective students through Student Handbook and the University website. This ensures that applicants for admission are made aware of the admission criteria, including the required language skills for admission and the language of the programme delivery. The Panel found that information relating to the grading system, attendance requirements, academic integrity and assessment criteria is clearly mentioned in Course Specifications and uploaded on the LMS for ease of access.

The academic staff and students interviewed also confirmed that course instructors explain the course specifications during the first week of each semester for each course. The SER clarified that KU has a credit transfer policy which allows for internal transfer of credits from

one programme to another within the same or another college. It is the responsibility of the College Transfer Evaluation Committee to firstly check and ensure that students do not take again the courses that they have successfully passed. Secondly, there is at least a 70% match of the equivalent transferred course description; and finally, the student has achieved at least 'Grade C' or above in those courses. For external transfers, KU adheres to the HEC requirement that a maximum of 66% of a programme courses can be recognised as long as these courses are 'equivalent.'

KU has clear admission criteria to ensure the success of students in its programmes. The SER clarifies that priority is given to applicants with a score of 60% or above in the High School Certificate. From interviews, the Panel learned that KU has placement tests for its colleges depending on the specialization. Placement Tests in English Language and Basic Mathematics are required for programmes in the College of Architectural Engineering and Design and the College of Business Administration. The College of Architectural Engineering and Design also requires a Placement Test in Engineering and Design Knowledge; students must acquire at least 60% in this test to be eligible for a direct admission to its programmes. The Panel confirmed during the site visit interviews that applicants with ILETS 5.5 or TEOFL 550 are exempted from the English Language Placement Test for those two colleges.

Applicants for the College of Law are admitted without any placement tests if their High School Certificate is 60% or above. However, applicants with less than 60% in their High School Certificate who fail to secure 60% in the Arabic Language Placement Test are required to take an 'Arabic Language' Foundation Course to qualify for admission. From interviews, the Panel learned that foundation courses in the College of Business Administration are 'English Language' and 'Basic Mathematics'; and in the College of Architectural Engineering and Design are 'English Language', 'Basic Mathematics', and 'Basics of Architecture, Engineering and Design'. From interviews, the Panel was informed that KU distributed a survey to evaluate students' satisfaction towards its foundation programmes and results showed that the majority of the students was satisfied. The Panel acknowledges KU's efforts in evaluating its foundation programmes to ensure students satisfaction and preparedness for their respected colleges.

From the SER and conducted interviews with academic staff and students, the Panel found that the language of instruction is specified as 'Arabic' for the College of Law, and 'English' for the College of Business Administration and College of Architecture Engineering and Design. The Panel finds that the languages of instruction are appropriate for the programmes offered in their respective Colleges.

The SER states that 'the University undertakes reviews of its admissions criteria annually.' The Panel found evidence of a review meeting that was held in July 2018. The Panel heard during interviews with the senior academic management that the revision of the admission criteria also takes into consideration 'reference to local and international norms'.

The SER also states that 'regular reviews of the Student Administration and Academic Record System are conducted and the review recommendations are used in the corrective planning process'. The Panel heard during the site visit interviews that an external agency conducted an internal audit on the Admissions and Registration Department in September 2018 and its

recommendations will be included in the upcoming plans of the department. Overall, the Panel agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 15: Introduction and Review of Programmes

The institution has rigorous systems and processes for the development and approval of new programmes - that includes appropriate infrastructure - and for the review of existing programmes to ensure sound academic standards are met. These requirements are applied consistently, regularly monitored and reviewed.

Judgement: Addressed

The SER clarifies that KU has a Programme Review, Development and Approval Policy, a Programme Development and Approval Procedure and a Programme Review Procedure. There is evidence in these documents, and in the SER, of an academic planning framework that cascades the University's mission and vision to the college mission and vision, programme aims, programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) and course intended learning outcomes (CILOs). All new academic programmes are considered by a committee that comprises internal and external members, and takes into account both institutional capacity and labour market and societal needs.

The SER clarifies that the institution's qualification design complies with the HEC requirements and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) design requirements, and has a clear approval process. The design framework depicts appropriate linkages between visions and missions; academic and industry feedback; students, alumni and employer feedback; as well as accreditation and regulatory standards.

The SER clarifies that the University has started a process of mapping existing academic qualifications to the NQF by a Mapping Panel. However, the Panel notes that the Programme Specification documents did not show NQF placement of programmes. It was, however, established during interviews with the academic staff that the process of NQF placement of programmes and courses is still in progress. Consequently, NQF levels and credits were, as a result, not reflected in the Programme Specification documents that were reviewed during the site visit. Interviews with senior academic staff confirmed that the University has already submitted applications for the Bachelor of Science in Business Management and Bachelor of Law to the General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework at BQA but still awaiting its response. The Panel recommends that KU follow up to expedite the NQF placement process to ensure that all its programmes and courses have appropriate NQF levels and credits

From interviews with academic staff members, the Panel learned that the allocated credit hours of the programmes are in line with HEC regulations. Students are required to complete

129 credits for the BSc. Business Management, BSc. Finance and Accounting, and BSc. Finance and Banking; unlike the Bachelor of Law which requires 138 credits; whereas the Bachelor of Interior Design requires 142 credits and the BSc. Architecture Engineering requires 179 credits.

From interviews, the Panel learned that the development of new academic programmes at KU starts with initial surveys to collect data and information from the market to ensure their alignment with its needs. Moreover, the alignment of the new programmes with the university's mission and college goals is ensured. The relevant College Industry Advisory Council is then consulted for their input. There is also informal benchmarking with selected HEIs to ensure that programme development is consistent with regional and international standards. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the College and Departmental Councils take primary responsibility for new programme development in their respective Colleges.

KU has both internal and external processes for approval of new academic programmes as clarified in the SER. The UPRDC plays an important role in reviewing all new programmes, which are then submitted to the UC, and eventually to the BoT, for approval. All new academic programmes require HEC approval prior to commencement. The Panel heard during interviews with the BoT and senior management that three master's programmes and one undergraduate programme have been developed and submitted to the HEC, and are still awaiting approval.

All academic programmes are subjected to both Annual Programme Reviews and Periodic Programme Reviews with the latter being conducted at a five-year interval. The Panel learned during interviews that periodic reviews can also be triggered by other circumstances such as a response to industry needs or an outcome of an external examination remarks. Interviews with the external examiners confirmed that there have been instances where external examiner recommendations have resulted in reviewing certain programmes. All in all, the Panel agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

- Follow up and expedite the NQF placement process to ensure that all offered programmes and courses by the University are placed/listed on the NQF.

Indicator 16: Student Assessment and Moderation

There are implemented transparent assessment policies and procedures including moderation. Assessment of student learning is appropriate and accurately reflects the learning outcomes and academic standards achieved by students.

Judgement: Addressed

The SER clarified that KU's assessment framework is governed by a university-wide Assessment and Moderation Policy, together with an Assessment Procedure, Assessment Moderation Procedure and an Assessment Appeal Procedure. Interviews with students

confirmed that the assessment policy and related procedures are all made accessible to students *via* the intranet portal. Additionally, students are informed about the assessment criteria of their courses at the beginning of the semester.

The Panel confirmed during a tour of the facilities, and in interviews with the academic staff, that the University uses a customized tool within the LMS for assessment design to measure student achievement in relation to specific CILOs. Academic staff interviewed confirmed that AQAC conducts regular workshops internally to train them on the mapping of assessment to CILOs. The Panel looked at different types of assessments during the site visit, and it was evident that the University has a clear assessment grading system with appropriate assessment methods, and a clear distribution of students' achievements measured against specific CILOs.

Assessment in each College is subjected to a rigorous system of internal and external moderation. From interviews, the Panel learned that the College Teaching, Learning, Student Assessment and Moderation Committee (CTLAC) undertakes internal moderation of all midterm and final examination question papers, while the University Teaching, Learning, Student Assessment and Moderation Committee (UC-TLAM) is responsible for internal moderation of final examination marks. The Assessment and Moderation Policy requires external moderators to be formally appointed. Furthermore, at least 25% of the course portfolios offered by each department must be externally moderated. From the provided evidence, the Panel notes that although the University has a process for appointing external examiners; yet, the Panel did not find any evidence of a formal appointment of external examiners, as this is done as an ad hoc process by the colleges. Consequently, the Panel is concerned with the current practice and recommends that formal measures should be taken when appointing external examiners.

The SER clarifies that the Assessment Appeals Procedure allows students to appeal their assessment marks and grades. The Panel was provided with samples of students' appeal forms. Students interviewed confirmed that they are aware of the assessment appeals process which is clearly explained to them during the orientation programme.

The SER states that the academic misconduct rules are based on the University of Bahrain procedure. The University has, in addition, developed and implemented its own Plagiarism Policy and Procedure. From interviews, the Panel learned that a variety of methods are used to raise awareness and discourage plagiarism, including the Student Handbook, the University website, Assessment Policy and Course Specifications. The University has also recently introduced the use of 'Turnitin' to prevent plagiarism, but some of the interviewed students were unsure about its use although samples of 'Turnitin' reports were provided to the Panel on site. The Panel advises KU to provide a comprehensive 'Turnitin' training that ensures knowledge and utilization of the software by all students. All in all, the Panel considers this Indicator addressed.

Recommendation

- Consider implementing a formal system of appointing and approving external examiners in order to eliminate the current practice of ad hoc appointments made by some Deans and Departmental Heads, and ensure consistency across Colleges.

Indicator 17: The Learning Outcomes

The institution ensures that all programmes and courses have clearly formulated learning outcomes and there are effective mechanisms to ensure that graduates achieve the learning outcomes of the programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

The SER states that the University uses a hierarchical model of CILOs and PILOs. From interviews, the Panel learned that programmes have PILOs that are derived from programme aims, and in turn, courses also have CILOs that are aligned to the PILOs. A standard mapping matrix is used to map CILOs to PILOs, and is well understood by the academic staff.

From interviews conducted during the site visit, the Panel was informed that each College has developed a comprehensive set of Graduate Attributes which specifies the knowledge, skills and behaviour that would be expected of graduates from any of its programmes. The Panel notes that the PILOs and the CILOs are clearly stated in the Programme Specifications and Course Specifications respectively and linked to the graduate attributes. The Panel found evidence that there is a mechanism to ensure that graduate attributes and PILOs are achieved across all programmes. The Panel appreciates the coherent manner in which programme aims, PILOs, CILOs and graduate attributes are aligned.

KU has approved processes and protocols in place for submitting learners' data and results for certification. From interviews, the Panel learned that the processes and protocols are described in the Certification Policy and Procedure. The Panel found that the institution's LMS and associated security measures are adequate for the maintenance of the integrity of students' records.

External reference points and Benchmarks are used in determining the equivalence of PILOs and CILOs. The Interior Design programme was benchmarked against 16 standards of the Council of Interior Design Accreditation, and the Architecture Engineering programme was benchmarked against national, regional and international institutions. From the SER and interviews, the Panel learned that the Department of Accounting and Finance had managed to grant its students five exemption papers from Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) for the BSc Accounting and Finance students. The Panel encourages the University to ensure that all its other academic programmes are assessed against appropriate professional or occupational standards for recognition.

The Panel learned from the interviews that the College Advisory Councils are effective in periodically reviewing the university's academic programmes to ensure that the University's programmes meet local, regional and international standards. The evidence provided includes action plans based on the feedback provided by the College Advisory Councils. The Panel is

generally satisfied with the level of expertise and the diversity in the composition of the College Advisory Councils and concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 18: Recognition of Prior Learning (where applicable and legislation permits)

The institution has a recognition of prior learning policy, and effective procedures for recognizing prior learning and assessing current competencies.

Judgement: Addressed

The University has formal arrangements for credit accumulation and credit transfer. The credit transfer arrangements are clearly set out in the Admission Policy, Admission Procedure, Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Recognition of Prior Learning Procedure. It is worth noting that recognition of prior learning has not been fully implemented in Bahrain yet. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 19: Short courses

The institution has effective systems in place for the management of its short courses (where applicable).

Not Applicable

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 4: The Quality of Teaching and Learning

Standard 5

Student Support Services

The institution has an efficient and effective student administration and academic support services.

Indicator 20: Student Support

The institution provides efficient and effective student administration and academic support services and encourages the personal development of students.

Judgement: Addressed

From the SER, it is evident that the student experience is an important aspect of KU, as it is the fourth Strategic dimension of the Strategic plan of the Uuniversity. Furthermore, there is a range of student support services, e.g. counselling, health and welfare, and career guidance. During the site visit tour, the Panel observed that there is a dedicated Student Affairs Department to support students in their admission, academic and personal development. The Student Support Report documents the support and guidance provided to students on an annual basis. The Panel found after meeting the students and alumni, that the Student Affairs Department organises many activities to engage students in extracurricular activities. Based on the site visit and interviews, the Panel observed that a full-time Student Counsellor with specialised qualifications provides support to students on academic, social and psychological issues. In addition, the Panel also ascertained that a nurse is available from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. to take care of the student's health issues. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the Industrial Training, Alumni and Student Career Guidance Unit together with Student Affairs Department organize some activities to prepare the students for the job market. However, the Panel is of the view that the arrangements could be more effective if all entities work in a more holistic approach.

From the SER, the Panel found that there is a detailed policy and procedure for students with special needs. They are supported in academic and other matters by the Student Affairs Department and the Counselling Unit. From interviews, the Panel learned that students with special needs are identified at the time of registration. From the SER and the site visit tour, the Panel also observed that the library also caters to the students with special needs by providing specialised learning resources such as Microsoft Magnifier, Screen Reading Microsoft Narrator and Text Help Read and Write.

The Panel was informed during interviews that an orientation programme for students is held each semester where students are informed about the relevant administrative procedures, their advisors and code of conduct right from the time of joining the University. In addition, KU's website, Student Handbook and postings on social media also support students in reminding them of basic procedures and important dates. Interviewed students clarified to the Panel that they are accurately advised of relevant administrative information and in a timely manner, in

particular, information about their enrolment, use of SIS for registration, use of LMS, ICT facilities and grades.

From the SER, the Panel notes that KU provides opportunities to students to engage in wider social, recreational, community and cultural events. The students participate in various activities such as field visits, cultural and career guidance activities. Although the Panel found and confirmed from interviews with students and alumni that Student Affairs Department, and Student Council are supporting and organising different kinds of activities; yet, it is suggested that the Student Affairs Department should encourage students to initiate some student driven activities through Student Clubs and organise international educational trips for a holistic development of students. Furthermore, as mentioned in the recommendation occurring in Standard 8, the Panel urges KU to increase the involvement of students in community engagement activities. Furthermore, the Panel suggests that KU consider engaging its alumni with its conducted activities to gain real life experiences.

From the SER the Panel found that the Institution monitors the student satisfaction on its services on a yearly basis. The student satisfaction survey evaluates satisfaction of students towards course instructors, studying arrangements, assessment and feedback, examinations, technological facilities, learning resources etc. From interviews and provided evidence, the Panel learned that improvement plans and corresponding progress reports are prepared by the IAU and are discussed at the University Council, Department Council and College Council, with participation of the Student Council. In addition, student can also give suggestions or file complaints about courses, instructors or services in the University. Through interviews, the Panel found that the improvement plans are implemented by the concerned academic or administrative department.

The Panel was informed that the Institution has well-defined policies and procedures for students at risk of academic failure that are implemented by college and University level committees. This enables early identification and follow up of at-risk students. The Panel further observed that a proper intervention procedure is followed by course instructors and academic advisors and is adequately supported by LMS reports. From interviews, the Panel ascertained that at-risk students are provided with counselling and guidance to enhance their academic performance.

With regards to Academic advising, the Panel was informed that KU has worked on supporting students in their academic studies through academic advising policy and procedure. Effective academic advising was evident to the Panel through the submitted academic advising reports. The Panel is satisfied that KU has an effective mechanism to identify and support students at risk of academic failure through its academic advising procedure.

The Panel notes that the Institution has an operative learning environment and learning resources that support the students academically through advising and tutorial support if needed as stated in the SER 'The academic advising is further supported in many instances where instructors provide additional tutoring for students, if needed'. Interviewed students clarified that they approach their advisors to assist them in getting tutorial classes as needed; they also confirmed that instructors are helpful and dedicate their time even after working hours.

The Panel acknowledges the efforts of KU's staff in supporting students *via* tutorial classes during and after working hours and concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 5: Student Support Services

Standard 6

Human Resources Management

The institution has appropriate human resource policies and procedures including staff development in place that demonstrably support and enhance the various operational activities of the institution.

Indicator 21: Human Resources

The institution employs human resources that are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to achieve the mission and to provide good quality higher education.

Judgement: Addressed

KU has a clear human resource strategy that constitutes dimension five in its Strategic Plan. The Human Resources Manual includes policies and procedures on recruitment, promotion and performance management, and the Panel verified their implementation. The Panel found evidence on developing and implementing manpower plans in the last three years. For example, the College of Business Administration recruited three Associate/Assistant Professors this academic year. With respect to promotion, KU follows Bahrain University's promotion policy and procedures for academic staff as per HEC instructions. Two faculty members and three administrative staff members were promoted in 2017-2018. During interview sessions, no complaint was reported. As for performance management, the SER and the performance evaluation document clarified that appraisals are conducted every semester for both academics and administrative staff. No reports on disagreement or review meetings are provided, and the Panel learned during the interviews that cases of disagreement are usually solved informally in accordance with cultural norms.

The Panel notes that KU's staff retention between 2013 and 2018 demonstrates a high rate (81.5% on average), with almost equal retention rates for academics and administrative staff. Moreover, the Panel learned during the interviews that the retention rate by the end of 2017-2018 was higher than 86% due to the effective implementation of the promotion, flexible working hours, annual staff satisfaction surveys, and KU's working environment. The Panel appreciates that KU's retention rates for academic and administrative staff in the last five years are high and generally improving.

The HR Department has an updated database on KU's staff's CVs. The Panel notes that the number of PhD holders and annual manpower plans are adequate to support the delivery of all programmes. The number of students in classes in each college in each semester in the academic years 2013-2014, 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 is less than the maximum of the HEC regulations.

KU's HR Manual, Employee Handbook and Faculty Handbook include policies, procedures and important information on induction and services provided for new staff. In practice, new academic and administrative staff members fill in induction forms, and receive the Employee Handbook and Faculty Handbook. The Panel learned during the interviews that administrative

staff are inducted on the first day they join KU's team; whereas academics are inducted in groups in coordination with academic chairs, usually at the beginning of the semester. In rare cases, induction is conducted individually and during the semester. During interviews, the Panel met part-time faculty members who confirmed that they had received a well-organized induction by their respected colleges when they commenced their work. From interviews and provided evidence, the Panel notes the impact of administrative and academics' feedback on improving the induction programmes.

As per HEC requirements, KU academic faculty members maintain a minimum of 48 working hours per week, including teaching load, research, institutional duties, and community engagement. The Panel, however, found the implementation of the workload allocation system problematic for several reasons. Firstly, while time allocated for research for Professors and Associate Professors is enough to ensure their knowledge remains current; time allocated for research for Assistant Professors and Lecturers is only five hours per week, which may not be enough to produce quality research output. During the interviews, academics denied this problem because academics work on their research during their free time. The Panel was also informed that almost all Law faculty have six office hours per week, while their teaching loads range widely, and in the College of Business Administration and College of Architecture Engineering and Design, office hours range widely. This implies that their actual workload is higher than expected. Secondly, the Workload Allocation Form for academics shows that most faculty members are allocated more than 20% of total working hours per week to administrative duties and committee responsibilities. Thirdly, the workload system does not always match the international good practices. For example, Assistant Professors and Lectures have the same workload allocation despite their different ranks. Finally, no data is provided on the overtime work practice that is regulated by policies and procedures in the Human Resources Manual. Consequently, the Panel recommends that KU allocate more research time for Assistant Professors and Lecturers, so that they can produce quality outputs publishable in reputable venues and acceptable for academic promotion.

The SER and the provided evidence describe the process for investigating staff complaints, differently. While the SER refers to a Grievance Committee that reports to the University Council and President, the HR Manual refers to this and an Appeal Committee; and the Employee Handbook refers to an Investigation Committee as well. Responding to a request from the Panel to KU to clarify the process, KU stressed that the HR Manual is the only reference on this issue. However, during the interviews, the Panel was also referred to the procedures in the Faculty Handbook and the Employee Handbook and learned that the Grievance Committee meets once every semester but was never invited to discuss any case throughout the previous year. When the Panel clarified this matter through interviews, it was confirmed that complaints are usually solved informally and in accordance with cultural norms. Therefore, this practice results in lack of documentation and thus inability to assess. Consequently, the Panel recommends that KU document cases of staff complaints, including those solved informally in order to prevent their occurrence in future. Considering all the above mentioned, the Panel urges KU to unify the description of the process throughout its different manuals and handbooks.

The Panel verified that an Employee Satisfaction Survey is conducted annually, analysed and reported to the University's Management for action. As for the Exit Survey, it is conducted by the leaving staff and the feedback is forwarded to their respected managers. The Panel notes that in the Exit Survey Analysis Report in AY 2016-2017, 65% of faculty rated the workload as too high which supports the remark of the Panel mentioned earlier.

From various interview sessions, the Panel was informed that survey analysis results in actions to make improvements, such as allocating budget for more social activities in 2018-2019, giving honorarium to faculty members with administrative tasks and functions, and stipulating terms and conditions of their additional roles in their job descriptions. Overall the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendations

- Allocate more research time for Assistant Professors and Lecturers, so that they can produce quality outputs publishable in reputable venues and acceptable for academic promotion.
- Document cases of staff complaints, including those solved informally in order to prevent their recurrence in the future.

Indicator 22: Staff Development

The institution has a systematic approach to staff development and provides opportunities for all staff to remain up-to-date in their areas of teaching, research and administration.

Judgement: Addressed

KU established a Staff Development Unit and hired a coordinator to manage all professional development activities. The HR Manual includes staff development policy and procedures. Staff development activities are based on their needs as expressed in their appraisal forms, which include questions on the technical skills and training programmes needed to enhance efficiency and improve performance. The IAU's analysis of the performance appraisal forms in 2017-2018 resulted in a list of 10 training needs, and the staff development plan for the following academic year includes most of those needs and more. It lists workshops, training sessions and seminars on topics such as HEC institutional accreditation awareness; advanced programme mapping to NQF; internal audit; best practices on teaching and learning along with professional development for researchers.

In recent years, faculty and administrative staff were trained on Edu-Gate system, the Applicant Training System (ATS), and the Portfolio of Capacity Building Programmes. Furthermore, the University provides financial support to encourage its staff members to attend conferences and conduct research and this was evident since 2015. This is in addition to supporting and providing reasonable resources for the advancement of professional goals of staff. The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by KU to cater for its staff development needs; and that the staff development

plan for the academic year 2018-2019 includes several training needs identified in the performance appraisal forms in 2017-2018.

As discussed earlier in Indicator 21, the HR Manual includes policy and procedures on staff performance management process, disagreement of appraisal rating, review meetings, evaluation and rewards. The Panel was provided with samples of academic and administrative staff appraisal forms. The Panel notes that comments and appraisal ratings are provided by the line manager, and no reports on disagreement or review meetings were provided. It was confirmed in the interviews that cases of disagreement are usually solved informally and in accordance with cultural norms, as mentioned earlier in this standard.

The Panel found that KU's academic and administrative staff development programmes are largely based on their needs which are identified in their appraisal forms. The Panel was provided with several examples of filled feedback forms after any activity. These feedback forms are analysed systematically by the IAU. The interviews confirmed that staff feedback was collected after external activities attended/conducted off campus; however, there is no evidence that it is analysed similarly to the IAU's analysis of staff evaluation of internal development programmes. Consequently, it is recommended that KU analyze staff evaluation of external development programmes.

The Panel studied the analytical reports of the activities' feedback forms and noted that generally they show positive evaluation outcomes of the training sessions along with few recommendations but without action plans. Therefore, the Panel encourages KU to address staff's recommendations in the feedback forms and take actions as needed. The Panel also agrees that KU satisfies the requirements of this Indicator.

Recommendation

- Analyze staff evaluation of external development programmes and take suitable actions to address their recommendations.

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 6: Human Resource Management

Standard 7

Research

The institution has a strategic research plan appropriate for its mission that is translated into a well-resourced operational plan, which is implemented and monitored.

Indicator 23: Research

The institution has implemented a plan for the development of research (e.g. disciplinary specific, scholarship of teaching and learning) appropriate for its institutional type that includes monitoring its research output, together with policies and processes to ensure the ethical and effective conduct of research.

Judgement: Addressed

Research is one of the three core functions of the University as stated in the SER and confirmed during interviews with senior management and staff. There is a Research Policy along with policies and procedures to support its implementation. It is worth noting that the research policy was revised in 2017 and approved in 2018 to address the recent HEC requirements and incorporate the national research priorities developed by HEC and the Economic Development Board's Vision 2030, as stated in the SER.

From KU's organisational structure and conducted interviews, the Panel notes that research is considered at various levels: VP of Academic Affairs and Scientific Research, Research Council and Research Unit. From interviews, the Panel learned that for each academic year, a research plan - aligned to the overall strategy - is put in place and monitored *via* monthly reports. Furthermore, there are suitable KPIs which are applicable for scientific research (publication of 1 research paper per year in a peer-reviewed, Scopus-indexed journal). From interviews with senior management and staff, the Panel was informed that academics are contractually obliged to publish one research paper per year; and in case this is delayed, academics are given all the needful support and the time is extended for a semester, as clarified during interview sessions.

From interviews, the Panel learned that the research budget is allocated as per HEC regulations, which has been recently changed to be 3% of the total revenue compared to the previous 3% of the net income. The implementation of this change is monitored by the BoT, VP of Academic Affairs and Scientific Research and Research Council; and is based on the estimation of the faculty output. Interviewed staff members confirmed the above mentioned and highlighted that currently they are encouraged to conduct more research and attend conferences as the budget can easily accommodate their professional needs and interests. On the other hand, although the Panel notes that there is a policy in place for awarding research grants, for attending conferences and for publishing in peer-reviewed journals. Yet, it is suggested that KU implement its Open Access Policy and integrate a repository for Open Access research papers and support materials which include pre-prints.

KU has a policy for Safe and Ethical Conduct of Research in place. Interviewed staff clarified that a culture of sharing experiences has been established such as workshops, sessions given by

faculty members who attended a conference to inform their colleagues about it along with staff discussion groups. The Panel is of the view that all these activities could be expanded to a solid culture of research that is based on intrinsic motivation.

Interviewed senior management highlighted that there are effective research capacity building opportunities for both academic and administrative staff. This is done on a semester basis for the former whereas on annual basis for the latter. During the annual appraisal, a needs assessment is conducted by the Line Manager and leads to the provision of workshops focussing on actual gaps. Other means to prioritize and enhance research capacity include general meetings at an institutional level followed by meetings at college levels to increase research output and focus on the research themes of KU which are green cities, sustainable buildings and renewable energy. From interviews, the Panel was informed that several workshops were conducted on KU's research themes along with seminars to enhance staff's capacity building. This was followed up with surveys on the conducted activities to gather additional information about its effectiveness. The Panel notes that there is an overall positive feedback from participants with respect to the organization, coverage, acquisition of usable skills, and the achievement of the objectives of these activities. However, during staff interviews, the Panel inquired about the involvement of students in staff's research output. The answer was none. Therefore, it is suggested that there should be deliberations on how to involve students in research activities as part of staff's teaching. Considering all the above mentioned, the Panel advises KU to better coordinate the research output amongst its colleges by encouraging them to work collaboratively and considering the distinct nature of each college. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

None

Indicator 24: Higher degrees with research (where applicable)

Where the institution offers higher degrees that include a research component, it provides effective supervision and resources for research students and ensures that its research degrees are of an appropriate level for the programme.

Not Applicable

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 7: Research

Standard 8

Community Engagement

The institution has a clear community engagement plan that is aligned with its mission and which is operational.

Indicator 25: Community Engagement

The institution has conceptualized and defined the ways in which it will serve and engage with local communities in order to discharge its social responsibilities.

Judgement: Addressed

Community engagement is the third dimension of KU's Strategic Plan and the third pillar of its vision and mission statements. Community engagement is clearly articulated and reflected in the policies and implemented accordingly. It is embedded in the organisation and culture of KU; and follows several strategic goals, as detailed in the Master Strategic Plan 2017-2022 and Community engagement operational plan 2018-2019.

To prove its commitment to community engagement and societal needs, KU has established a Community Engagement and Continuing Education Unit. This unit reports directly to the Office of the VP for Administrative Affairs. According to the overall strategic goal, community engagement is also part of the assigned duty to academic staff in addition to their teaching responsibilities, and this was confirmed by academic staff members and senior management during interview sessions.

From interviews, the Panel learned that there is a database to record all the community engagement activities and a report is generated annually. Furthermore, feedback is collected from stakeholders involved in community engagement and improvement is incorporated in planning upcoming events. From interviews, the Panel was informed about different kinds of community engagement activities such as Recycle Campaign, the organization of an annual International Seminar on 'Green Cities, Sustainable Buildings and Renewable Energy' and inviting the public to attend, the offering of full and partial scholarships to certain government bodies in Bahrain and Ramadan Giveaways. Moreover, the Panel was provided with a list of KU's conducted community engagement activities for the last five years. However, it was noted that KU's students' involvement is limited; and it is recommended that KU increase the involvement of students in community engagement activities to enhance the concept of community responsibilities and the feeling of belongingness to the wider community. Furthermore, although the Panel acknowledges the efforts of KU in conducting several community engagement activities. Yet, it is suggested that KU set up a Web-accessible database to allow its internal and external stakeholders to follow-up on its community engagement events/activities. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation

- Increase the involvement of students in community engagement activities to enhance the concept of community responsibilities and the feeling of belongingness to the wider community.

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 8: Community Engagement