



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**University College of Bahrain
Department of Communication & Multimedia
Bachelor of Arts in Communication &
Multimedia
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 12-14 February 2024
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HA129-C3-R129

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Acronyms

APR	Academic Programme Review
AY	Academic Year
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CMM	Communication and Multimedia
DC	Department Council
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
IAB	Industry Advisory Board
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
LTARC	Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PEO	Programme Educational Objective
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QAAO	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office
QAMS	Quality Assurance Management System
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System
SRC	Scientific Research Council
UCB	University College of Bahrain
UCC	University College Council

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

Standard 1: The Learning Programme

Standard 2: Efficiency of the Programme

Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

Standard 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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

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

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

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	University College of Bahrain
College/ Department*	Communication and Multimedia
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (Public Relations Concentration) Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (Graphic Design Concentration)
Qualification Approval Number	-
NQF Level	-
Validity Period on NQF	-
Number of Units*	Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (Public Relation Concentration) - 42 Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (Graphic Design Concentration) - 40
NQF Credit	-
Programme Aims*	PEO1. Equip students with theoretical and practical knowledge that encourages and stimulates their creativity in developing public relations, graphic design, and digital media projects with the latest tools and trends as demanded by the industry. PEO2. Embed professional ethics and work-ready skills that prepare them to be leaders and innovators in the fields of public relations, graphic design, and digital media. PEO3. Solve real world problems by applying critical and reflective thinking skills through integration and application of knowledge in the fields of public relations, graphic design, and digital media. PEO4. Instill distinct competencies that equip students to succeed in their career in the media and communication industry or to pursue further graduate studies in the related field.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	Knowledge and understanding PILO1. Demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of the theories, concepts and principles of Public Relations and Graphic Design.

	<p>PILO2. Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of the different processes and procedures in Public Relations and Graphic Design.</p> <p>Subject Specific Skills</p> <p>PILO3. Execute the relevant processes and procedures pertaining to public relations and graphic design to deal with advanced/complex situations.</p> <p>PILO4. Use specialized tools in designing creative and innovative media content adhering to the current industry standard technology.</p> <p>Critical Thinking Skills</p> <p>PILO5. Choose pro-active strategies in identifying and solving problems at various levels.</p> <p>PILO6. Critically analyze and evaluate relevant applications in public relations and graphic design.</p> <p>Transferable Skills</p> <p>PILO7. Act professionally in oral, visual, and written communication in the field of public relations, and graphic design.</p> <p>PILO8. Work in variable contexts, independently or in groups with significant responsibility adhering to ethical standards.</p>
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* Mandatory fields

III. Judgement Summary

The Programme's Judgement: Confidence

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

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

IV. Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

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

Judgement: Partially Addressed

- The programme has been offered under the name of the 'Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia' (CMM) by the University College of Bahrain (UCB) since the Academic Year (AY) 2007-2008. It was originally a Bachelor of Graphic Design programme that was licensed by the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 2002. The name of the programme has changed to CMM following the addition of two concentrations in Multimedia and Public Relations in addition to the Graphic Design. However, as per the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the Multimedia concentration has not been offered since 2022 due to declining student enrolments. The Panel was also informed during the Site Visit that UCB has recently introduced an Arabic Track in Public Relations concentration.
- The CMM programme has been delivered through the Department of Communication and Multimedia since 2007 and was recently revised in line with UCB's new Qualification Design, Approval, and Review (Annual & Periodic) Policy. The evidence provided to the Panel includes the CMM Academic Planning Framework of 2018-2024, which was revised in June 2023, benchmarking reports, and the Programme Specification document; however, none of these documents refers to the Arabic Track in Public Relations. The Panel also noted that there is no clear policy on how the Arabic Track is managed or how consistency in the provision of English and Arabic resources is assured. Therefore, the Panel recommends that, as a matter of urgency, UCB should develop a policy to ensure the parity of the learning experience for students studying in English or Arabic in terms of course delivery, resources, and assessment.
- UCB uses a Risk Management Policy to identify, assess, and monitor risks in the Institution. The Department prepares an annual Risk Register which has four sections:

identification; assessment; response; and monitoring. Under the risk response section, the Department records the strategies that they will adopt to avoid/control the risks. The completed Risk Register is approved annually by the University College Council (UCC).

- The Panel notes that the CMM programme has not yet been placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as the institutional listing is a pre-requisite for programme placement. The Panel also notes that there is a lack of clarity about the name and focus of the programme. The Academic Planning Framework document states that there have been many proposed changes to the title and structure of the programme which will be implemented although no timeline or further information is provided on what these changes entail. The CMM Title Change Rationale document and the Feasibility Report for the revised concentration in Digital Media document refer variously to a 'Bachelor of Arts in Digital Media' and a 'Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Digital Media'. The two documents make general comments without presenting data or analysis of students, competitors or industry input. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should revise the programme's title and concentrations considering benchmarking, consultations with subject matter experts, stakeholders' feedback, and market needs analysis in line with UCB's new Qualification Design, Approval, and Review (Annual & Periodic) Policy.
- The SER states that the Programme Education Objectives (PEOs) serve as the aims of the CMM programme. The Panel notes that the PEOs are appropriate and aligned with the mission of the CMM programme. These PEOs were recently revised in 2022-2023 in consultation with stakeholders. The mission of the CMM programme is mapped against UCB's mission in the Programme Specification document and contributes to its achievement.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has seven generic graduate attributes that were recently revised in 2023. The Programme Specification document includes a mapping of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) to the graduate attributes. The PILOs were also recently refined and concentration specific PILOs have been created which are mapped to the PEOs and the mission of the CMM programme. The Panel notes that the PILOs are generally appropriate to the type and level of the degree awarded, appropriately written, and well

disseminated to internal and external stakeholders through UCB Catalogue, the CMM Catalogue and the Programme Specifications.

- The Course Specification document outlines the details of each course, including explicitly stated Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), against which the student's performance is assessed. As per the SER and the provided evidence, the CILOs were benchmarked against local, regional, and international programmes. The CILOs are also mapped to the appropriate NQF sub-stands and PILOs. The Panel notes that the CILOs are appropriate for the level of the courses and their contents, and there are adequate mechanisms in place to ensure their appropriateness and conformance with NQF requirements.

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

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

Judgement: Partially Addressed

- The Panel observed that the Study Plans for the Graphic Design and Public Relations concentrations ensure appropriate student progression and workload. Curriculum reviews are conducted by the Industry Advisory Board (IAB), Department Council (DC), and UCB Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee (LTARC). During the Site Visit, the Panel observed that course content requires updates to reflect 21st-century communication trends and the evolving industry's cultural context. Current content remains analog-focused, and course naming could be modernized. The 2022-2023 Focused Group Report emphasized the need for digitization and technology integration. The Panel recommends that UCB enhance course content with advanced digital and technological components and regularly review and update textbooks and references to ensure students access current knowledge during their studies.
- The Panel recognizes faculty efforts to incorporate practical training into courses, as noted during Extension Visit interviews and evidenced in course portfolios such as 'Public Relations Campaigns' (COM402) and 'Interactive Digital Media' (GRD427). Nonetheless, the Panel recommends that UCB further strengthen benchmarking across practical courses and expand hands-on learning opportunities to ensure alignment with industry standards.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has an institution-wide Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Policy, which stipulates the expectations of faculty in delivering programmes and courses, the range of teaching methods used across the College. The teaching methods are included in the Course Specifications documents and are in line with UCB's teaching and learning philosophy, which encourages students' participation in learning in a holistic way, balancing knowledge, experience, professional practice and application of theory to their degree studies. The SER refers to the use of different teaching methods including interactive lectures, class debates, guest lectures, field trips, case studies and research-informed teaching.
- E-Learning is not mentioned in UCB's Teaching, Learning and Enhancement Policy and this omission is not explained in the documentation provided to the Panel. There is, however, a separate document called UCB E-Learning and Assessment Guidelines which appears to refer to teaching delivery and examinations during the COVID period. The Panel is of the view that E-Learning would be more effectively utilised by staff and students if it were incorporated into the teaching and assessment policies. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should incorporate E-Learning into the teaching and assessment policies to be effectively and consistently utilised by staff and students.
- The Panel notes that students are provided with opportunities to engage in research and professional practice through a range of formal, informal and non-formal learning activities, such as research projects, internships, workshops, field trips and guest speakers. The Panel also notes that the combination of UCB's learning and teaching policies, procedures, and course specification documents describes a learning environment that supports students in the pursuit of creativity and innovation in their degree studies and lifelong learning.

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has established clear policies and procedures for assessment, moderation, and academic integrity, which are effectively communicated to stakeholders. Assessment methods and weightings are outlined in the Course Specification documents, though they

primarily rely on examinations. Formative and summative assessment functions are not always explicitly detailed in the documentation reviewed by the Panel during the Site Visit (see Indicator 3.1).

- UCB's Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy requires students to maintain honesty and integrity in assignments, assessments, and examinations, as outlined in the Code of Conduct. The Policy comprehensively addresses various types of misconduct, including repeated violations, along with corresponding disciplinary actions and penalties. Students can appeal examination grades using the Grade Revision Request Form, and the grade appeal process is detailed in the Student Handbook.

Standard 2

Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 2.1: Admitted Students

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- According to the SER, UCB's Student Admissions Policy emphasizes impartiality and fairness in the admission of prospective students. It also accommodates students with special needs. This policy was benchmarked against four universities. It outlines the admission criteria and processes for new students, transfer students, and students with special needs. Details of the admission requirements are available on UCB's website and in the Student Handbook. Admission to the CMM programme requires meeting the conditions specified in the registration booklet, such as providing certified copies of high school transcripts, school report cards, a three-year academic performance record, and graduate transcripts with course descriptions. A minimum score of 60% in the Secondary School Certificate is among these requirements.
- During the Extension visit, the Panel observed that the entry requirements for the Arabic Track were updated to exempt students from English language proficiency tests (IELTS, TOEFL, etc.), while these remain mandatory for the English Track. However, it remained unclear from the admissions and evidence provided whether Arabic Track students complete all or part of their courses in Arabic. Additionally, the Panel observed that the entry requirements for the Graphic Design track include an optional submission of a portfolio of artistic work to evaluate applicants' suitability, which does not align with best practices. The Panel is of the view that introducing a mandatory portfolio submission requirement would ensure that applicants possess the essential artistic and technical skills before enrolling in this track. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should incorporate English requirements for all tracks and establishing the submission of a creative portfolio as a mandatory admission criterion for the Graphic Design track.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UCB has established comprehensive policies and procedures for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion of academic staff, which were revised and updated during AY 2022-2023. These policies and procedures are comprehensively outlined in the Human Resources Policies and Procedures document, as well as the Faculty Guidebook. The Faculty Workload document specifies the guidelines and practices for allocating faculty members' workload in line with HEC regulations. Evidence of the transparent and consistent application of these policies and procedures was presented to the Panel.
- During the Site Visit, the Panel observed eight full-time faculty members with diverse specializations but agreed with interviewees that more faculty are needed for Digital Media and Business Analytics. By the Extension Visit, UCB had begun recruitment efforts as per its staff recruitment plan and issued a job advertisement. UCB also reported the appointment of three new full-time faculty members for 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. The Panel noted from the Graphic Design Course Table that the faculty member teaching Graphic Design courses does not hold a Master's or Doctoral degree in the field but specializes in Digital Media and Advertising. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB prioritize recruiting faculty members with advanced qualifications specifically in Graphic Design to ensure subject expertise and improve the quality of course delivery.
- During the Site Visit, the Panel observed a high turnover rate among teaching staff, which had adversely impacted the CMM programme delivery and student recruitment over the past three academic years. During the Extension Visit, the Panel learned that UCB had introduced measures, such as questionnaires, to gauge faculty satisfaction, particularly among those who left the institution. Some initiatives were also introduced in line with the UCB Staff Professional Development Policy, including workshops, professional training, conference participation, applications for professional body memberships, and research-based activities. In 2023-2024, two CMM faculty members presented research at international conferences, and all faculty engaged in courses and workshops to keep up with industry trends. Additionally, UCB's membership in the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) would facilitate faculty involvement in global academic and professional networks.

Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources

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

Judgement: *Addressed*

- As per the SER, UCB offers sufficient ICT facilities, study spaces, and well-equipped classrooms and laboratories. Available facilities include academic and administrative offices, a medical room, classrooms of various capacities, a library, and computer-equipped study areas. The 2022-2023 student satisfaction survey highlights high levels of satisfaction with these facilities. During the Extension Visit, the Panel confirmed that facilities such as the digital photography studio and graphic design studios meet the current programme structure and curriculum needs.
- Under the ICT Learning Resources Policy, UCB ensures comprehensive IT support, benefiting students, faculty, and staff. This support covers servers, client computers, printers, photocopiers, and LCD projectors. Computer laboratories are accessible throughout the week, with weekend access granted upon ICT Manager approval, while library computers are available during regular hours. UCB also provides constant internet access, organizes workshops on electronic resources, and offers informal library study spaces.
- The IT Laboratory Maintenance Report (2022-2023) outlines a thorough annual maintenance routine to ensure optimal laboratory functionality. Tasks include deleting cache, formatting systems as needed, updating operating systems, repairing hard disk errors, and installing or updating software. Evidence of formal mechanisms for maintaining and assessing resources was provided.
- The Human Resources & Health and Safety Committee oversees health and safety matters at UCB, conducting annual risk assessments and setting safety objectives. The committee promotes a positive safety culture by involving stakeholders in policy development. During the Extension Visit, the Panel reviewed the Special Needs Student Policy, which outlines accommodations such as ramps, accessible restrooms, ground-floor classrooms, and tailored support. Elevator installations are among the ongoing improvements.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB uses an automated Student Information System (SIS) called LOGSIS with student and faculty portals. Faculty members and students have their own credentials created by the IT Administrator and can access the portals *via* UCB website. The system generates a variety of reports that inform decision-making, including registration, scheduling, student withdrawals, at-risk students, grades and transcripts, workloads and academic advising. UCB also uses Microsoft Teams for class materials, assignment submission and communication with students. The Panel notes that, while it served its purpose during the COVID period, Microsoft Teams is not an appropriate learning management system and recommends that UCB should expedite the planned move from Microsoft Teams to Moodle to enhance the student learning experience.
- As per the SER, strict guidelines are maintained by UCB to guarantee the confidentiality of student records and grading accuracy. It is the responsibility of the course instructors to correct examinations, audit and submit grades through the faculty portal. After grades are entered and approved on the site, they cannot be changed unless they are verified against the results of the final examinations. The Director of Admission and Registration verifies the grades after they are reviewed and confirmed by the HoD, which are then approved by the Department Council and submitted to the UCC for approval or adjustment. Within 24 hours of receiving permission from UCC, the Director of Admission and Registration releases verified grades, which students can view through the portal.
- As per the SER, UCB has a Security of Learner Records and Certificates Issuance Policy, which includes the processes related to the safekeeping of students' records which are stored in LOGSIS. The HoDs receive lists of eligible students for awards and graduation from the Admission and Registration Unit for review following the announcement of final examination results. Certificates and transcripts are issued through the Admission and Registration Unit after being approved by a resolution of the UCC. All UCB certificates are issued in English using the qualifications titles as approved by the UCC and HEC.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

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

Judgement: Addressed

- As per the SER and the evidence that was made available to the Panel, UCB provides sufficient support in terms of library, resources, induction, and career counselling. Student satisfaction survey analysis for AY 2022-2023 indicates that 89% of students agree that UCB provides appropriate career and employment services. During the Site Visit, it was noted by administration staff and students that Career Days, workshops, guest speakers and field visits are provided to help students prepare for work and creative careers.
- Students actively participate in decision-making committees and councils, ensuring their voices are represented. The Student Council and university committees address women's needs and promote equal opportunities. During the Site Visit, students of all genders expressed positive feedback about various student clubs offering sporting, social, environmental, and cultural activities catering to diverse interests and abilities.
- There is evidence of academic advising in the CMM programme, along with targeted support for students at risk of academic failure. UCB classifies students as high- or low-risk based on their academic performance. Low-risk students, with a CGPA between 1.7 and less than 2.0 after their second semester, receive intensive advising over three semesters to raise their CGPA to at least 2.0. High-risk students, with a CGPA below 1.7 after their second semester, are placed on academic probation and subject to close monitoring by the Department. During the Site Visit interviews, students, staff, faculty, and alumni expressed positive feedback about UCB's academic and non-academic support services. Evidence, including survey analysis, indicates a high level of satisfaction with these services. The Panel appreciates the high level of satisfaction of students with the academic and non-academic support services provided by UCB.

Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB's assessment policies and procedures outline diverse teaching, learning, and assessment methods to support course implementation. However, the Panel observed during the Site Visit that the CMM Course Specification documents rely primarily on examinations, and the practical and technical aspects of students' work samples need improvement. During the Extension Visit, the Panel noted proactive steps by the CMM Department to revise course specifications, introducing professional practice-based activities. These updates include formative and summative methods such as assignments, simulations, workshops, and case studies, alongside project-based assessments that connect theoretical knowledge to real-world applications, reflecting creative industry requirements.
- As per the SER, UCB has established clear guidelines to ensure the alignment of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) with graduate attributes, and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) with PILOs. Evidence provided includes Course Specification documents with NQF mapping scorecards that link assessments to CILOs. Formal processes are in place at both course and programme levels to measure ILO attainment. According to the SER, the Institutional Performance Measurement Office compiles CILO assessment results and generates reports on students' achievement of PILO requirements in each CMM course. These findings are reflected in course reports, while employer and alumni surveys provide additional insights into graduate PILO achievement.
- The course reports are received and reviewed by UCB's LTARC, while external moderation supports assessment oversight. Internal and external moderation findings are documented in the External Moderator's Report and consolidated into the Programme Coordinator Moderation Report. These reports inform the Annual Programme Monitoring and Accomplishment Report, which feeds into the Department's Operational

Plan for continuous improvement. During the Extension Visit, updated templates in the Course File Moderation and Reporting Folder were observed, ensuring efficient moderation of coursework, mid-term, and final examinations. For AY 2024-2025, the programme is enhancing moderation by appointing additional external moderators for Public Relations and Graphic Design assessments.

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has a policy on Academic Integrity and Honesty as well as a Plagiarism Policy which are disseminated to staff and students. The Student Code of Conduct Policy sets out all penalties for violations in relation to academic integrity. It emphasizes the importance of adhering to good academic practices, including accurate citation and referencing, as these are fundamental to demonstrating a clear commitment to academic integrity.
- There are sound implemented processes for deterring and detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct, which are consistently applied. Cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism are recorded, and appropriate actions are taken. There is a samples of plagiarism reports in the evidence provided. While plagiarism detection software is utilised by UCB for written assignments and examinations, CMM faculty members need to maintain and update their knowledge of alternative detection methods for plagiarism in creative projects and the impacts of Generative Artificial Intelligence.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

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

Judgement: Partially Addressed

- UCB's Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedures emphasis the alignment of assessments with CILOs to ensure reliability and consistency, thereby maintaining academic and professional standards. The Panel observed that internal moderation is effectively implemented, supports course and programme enhancement and is overseen by the LTARC, which produces annual reports identifying areas for improvement.

- During the Site Visit, the Panel observed that external moderation, with only one moderator assigned to a single concentration, was inadequate for effectively reviewing and improving both courses and the programme, as well as ensuring consistent assessments and fair grading. By the Extension Visit, UCB had formalized the process for appointing external moderators, with approvals managed by UCC. For AY 2024-2025, UCB appointed two external moderators specializing in Public Relations and Graphic Design, with plans to recruit a third moderator in Spring 2025, aiming to externally moderate over 25% of assessments each year. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should further enhance external moderation by increasing the diversity of external moderators across all specializations, enhancing their involvement in the review of assessments and grading, and expanding the percentage of assessments moderated annually.

Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has a new Internship Policy, which was published in May 2023 and an Internship Handbook that was updated in 2022. The Handbook clearly illustrates the roles and responsibilities of the site supervisor, academic supervisor, and students. The Panel notes that the CMM programme includes a mandatory three-credits 'Internship' (CGM400) course which spreads over a minimum of 200 hours and is registered after the completion of 90 credits of study. As stated in the SER, the Internship Handbook is shared with all relevant stakeholders. Also, in the site visit interviews, all stakeholders confirmed that they are aware of the expectations of the internships.
- The Panel notes that specific CILOs have been defined for the 'Internship' (CGM400) course and are set at the appropriate NQF level. The internship assessment methods are also aligned with the CILOs, which are mapped to the CMM PILOs. The Internship Reports indicate the level of the achievement of CILOs by students and the results are aggregated to illustrate the level of the achievement of PILOs per course.
- The Panel noted that the internship assessment methods are clearly defined, deployed and well-managed. These methods include evaluations by the site supervisor (60%) on the interns' job performance and the academic supervisor (40%) on the internship report (30%) and the presentation (10%) that all interns are required to prepare and deliver upon the completion of the internship. The Panel was provided with the Internship assessment

rubrics which ensure consistency and the appropriateness of assessment in terms of content and level.

- The Panel was informed during the interviews that starting from the Spring semester of AY 2022-2023, UCB has administered a survey to collect information on the internship experience of the students. The Panel notes that results of these surveys are utilised during the annual review and the areas that require improvement are recorded in the Annual Programme Review and Monitoring Report.

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

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

Judgement: Addressed

- The CMM programme includes a mandatory three-credit 'Final Year Project' (GRD409) course for the Graphic Design concentration and a mandatory three-credit 'Public Relations Project' (COM409) course for the Public Relations concentration. The Course Specification documents of GRD409 and COM409 illustrate the alignment of the assessment to the CILOs and its contribution to the achievement of the CMM PILOs. The Undergraduate Project Handbook clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of students and academic supervisors.
- The Panel notes that there are mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of the graduation project procedures. As per the SER and the site visit interviews, the supervisors conduct regular meetings with students to monitor and review their progress. The student satisfaction survey results show that the students are highly satisfied with the project arrangements in the Department.
- The Course Specification document includes the grade distribution for the different components of the assessment of the final year project which consists of 20% for the first report, 40% for the second report and 40% for the final project. A jury which consists of two internal and two external members evaluates the final project. The external jury members need to possess relevant work experience in the related field; however, the Undergraduate Project Handbook does not include the role of jury members. Therefore, the Panel suggests updating the Undergraduate Project Handbook with this information.
- During the Extension Visit, the Panel observed enhancements in the quality of CMM final-year projects, attributed to collaboration with industry leaders and benchmarking against comparable programmes. In June 2024, the Industry Advisory Board (IAB) recommended

industry-relevant topics for Graduation Projects, approving a list aligned with industry standards and giving students the flexibility to choose from these topics. The updated CMM Guidelines for Undergraduate Projects ensure alignment with academic and industry standards, as outlined in supporting documents. The Panel also confirmed that assessment rubrics were thoroughly reviewed and updated to provide clear criteria for evaluating performance. These updates include tailored rubrics reflecting the requirements of various projects, incorporated into the Project Course Specifications Form, ensuring structured and level-appropriate assessments.

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The SER highlights high attainment levels of PEOs (86.25% and 91.7%) and PILOs (84.1% and 92.3%), assessed *via* examinations and the Exit Survey. However, from the review of assessed work samples, including final-year projects, the Panel noted that the practical and technical components of the CMM programme require further enhancement, as previously mentioned under Indicator 1.3.
- The SER provides data on student registration and graduation over five academic years, showing fluctuations in enrolment and a significant 43% decline in student numbers, from 98 in the first semester of AY 2017-2018 to 56 in the second semester of AY 2022-2023. Graduates also decreased sharply, from 17 in AY 2017-2018 to just two in AY 2022-2023.
- The Panel observed inconsistencies between the statistics under Indicator 3.6 in the SER, which report high retention rates of 91% and 93% for the last two academic years, and the data in the 'Statistics and Information' section of the SER and the 'Cohort Analysis' document. While the SER indicates an average graduation period of 3.5 to 4 years, the cohort analysis reveals that most students graduated within 4 to 5 years, with some taking 5 to 6 years and a few completing within 7-8 years.
- During the Extension Visit, the Panel reviewed a cohort analysis conducted by the CMM Department, which examined key metrics such as progression, graduation timelines, retention, and employability. In AY 2022-2023, 91.67% of graduates completed their degrees within the standard 4 years, with only one student taking 6 years. Similarly, in AY 2023-2024, 94.74% of graduates completed within 4 years. Extended timelines (7-8 years) in earlier years were linked to external factors. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that UCB should improve data collection, investigate declining enrolment, and develop strategies to attract and retain students.

Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has clear policies and procedures that meet the needs of the CMM programme and guide its day-to-day operations. The Panel notes that most of UCB policies and procedures were recently revised and updated. The Panel also notes that these policies and procedures are well communicated to stakeholders. UCB provides them with access to all its policies and procedures *via* OneDrive (I-Cloud) server.
- As per the SER, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) oversees the implementation of the Quality Assurance Management System (QAMS) at different levels within the institution. The QAMS is clearly described in the Quality Assurance Manual, which includes a set of policies and procedures covering all the core functions of the institution. The Panel notes that all academic staff are provided with a broad understanding of the related quality assurance aspects through a series of workshops conducted by the QAAO. The Panel also notes with appreciation that there is an evolving QAMS at the institutional level and staff in diverse areas are working collaboratively to implement the QAMS and the related policies and processes to ensure a quality educational experience for students.
- UCB has mechanisms in place to monitor the implementation of its policies and procedures across the College and its departments. The implementation is overseen by the College and Department Councils along with the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) at the institutional level. The Panel notes that the QAMS at UCB has been internally evaluated by the QAAO which reviews its performance on an annual basis. UCB also has been following a review period of four years to systematically review its policies and procedures.

Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB has a clear and appropriate organisational structure for the management of the CMM programme, which is published on its website. The UCC is the highest decision-making academic council at UCB, which is overseen by the Board of Trustees. The HoD is responsible for the delivery of the CMM programme and represents the Department in UCC. The Panel notes that UCB's existing reporting lines are well-defined in the organizational structure and the committees at the department and college levels communicate effectively with the College and Department Councils to make the necessary decisions.
- UCB has clear job descriptions and Terms of Reference (ToR) for senior management positions, faculty and committees that are accessible to all UCB staff *via* the SharePoint. The Panel notes that there are an increasing number of committees that may become overly burdensome for a small number of faculty members in a programme of only 56 students. Therefore, the Panel suggests that UCB analyses any overlaps and redundancies in existing committees, and explores merging them into fewer, more efficient committees with broader scope.
- As per the SER, UCB's Monitoring and Review System Policy makes clear where the custodianship of the programme's academic standards rests on the departmental and college levels. The HoD provides academic leadership at the department level and ensures the department operations are in line with the strategic plan of UCB. Faculty members are also responsible for course delivery and ensuring and improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in line with the institutional policies and procedures, which are monitored by the committees and councils at the different levels.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

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

Judgement: Addressed

- UCB's Programme Review and Development Procedures include a clear description of the annual review process that is carried out by an internal programme team formed by the HoD. The collected feedback from internal and external stakeholders is analysed by the

programme team and the annual review outcomes are collated in a comprehensive Annual Monitoring Report. The evidence that was available to the Panel includes the Annual Monitoring Report of the last three academic years, a sample of the programme improvement plans, which are based on the annual reviews of the programme. The plans include actions that are allocated to specific individuals/committees, timelines and required resources.

- As per the Qualification, Design, Approval, and Review Policy, the periodic review of the programme is conducted once every four years and results in a new study plan that is submitted to HEC for approval after being internally approved by UCC. As per the SER, the periodic review includes holistic benchmarking and feasibility studies of different aspects of the programme such as PEOs, PILOs and credit hours.

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

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

Judgement: Partially Addressed

- UCB's Benchmarking Policy, updated in May 2023, addresses several areas that were previously omitted in the benchmarking activities of the CMM programme for AY 2021-2022. These activities, which compared the programme to similar offerings at five international, two regional, and three local universities, did not encompass aspects such as assessment and evaluation methods and weightings, the use of technology in teaching and learning, co-curricular and extracurricular activities, and moderation practices.
- The evidence provided to the Panel includes several benchmarking reports covering aspects such as the programme title, admission requirements, study plans, and credit hours. Additionally, the benchmarking activities addressed PEOs, PILOs, teaching and learning methods, and resources. However, the Panel is of the view that the CMM programme would greatly benefit from a more comprehensive benchmarking exercise that encompasses all areas outlined in the Benchmarking Policy. As such, the Panel recommends that UCB should undertake a holistic and thorough benchmarking exercise, compiled into a single report, that primarily compares the CMM programme with similar within the country and region, utilizing a range of criteria and metrics as specified in the Benchmarking Policy.
- The Panel notes that UCB has a Policy on Surveys, which was recently developed and published in January 2023. The Policy guides the administration, dissemination, analysis,

and utilization of surveys. The Panel also notes that there are several surveys in place for collecting feedback from internal and external stakeholders.

- According to the SER, the Academic Departments in coordination with QAAO are responsible for designing/revising their surveys. During AY 2022-2023, all surveys were reviewed by the QAAO in coordination with the concerned units and departments and were approved by UCC. The QAAO is also responsible for analysing all the surveys and the survey results are discussed in QAAC. The identified actions for improvement are communicated to the concerned units and departments and recorded in their improvement plans. During the site visit interviews, stakeholders confirmed that their feedback is collected on a regular basis *via* surveys or during meetings. They were also satisfied with changes implemented based on their feedback.

Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour Market and Societal Needs

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

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- There is a dedicated and functioning IAB for the CMM programme consisting of discipline experts, employers, and alumni. The formation, functions, and responsibilities of the IAB members are clearly stated in the IAB ToR, which indicates that IAB meetings are conducted at least once every semester. From the evidence provided, the Panel notes that IAB's suggestions for improvement have been reflected in the revised CMM programme. As per the SER, the IAB is one of the mechanisms used by UCB to ensure that the programme meets the labour market, national and societal needs. The other mechanisms are the surveys conducted by UCB to collect feedback from employers and alumni and the market needs and feasibility studies that are conducted by the Academic Departments. Based on the evidence, the Panel notes that the applied mechanisms are monitored and reviewed. As mentioned in Indicator 4.4, all surveys were revised and updated in AY 2022-2023.
- The evidence that was made available to the Panel includes a Market Needs and Analysis Report and a Feasibility Report for the revised concentration in Digital Media. However, the Panel notes that the two reports do not present compelling information, particularly regarding the purpose or focus of the programme, the demand/cultural context in Bahrain, or a SWOT analysis of UCB's competitors in the region. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UCB should ensure that conducted market and feasibility studies are more rigorous and provide relevant qualitative and quantitative data that would enable senior management to make informed decisions regarding the CMM programme.

V. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site and extension visits, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020:

There is Confidence in the Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia offered by the University College Bahrain.

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

1. The high level of satisfaction of students with the academic and non-academic support services provided by UCB.
2. There is an evolving QAMS at the institutional level and staff in diverse areas are working collaboratively to implement the QAMS and the related policies and processes to ensure a quality educational experience for students.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the University College of Bahrain should:

1. Develop a policy to ensure the parity of the learning experience for students studying in English or Arabic in terms of course delivery, resources, and assessment.
2. Revise the programme's title and concentrations considering benchmarking, consultations with subject matter experts, stakeholders' feedback and market needs analysis in line with UCB's new Qualification Design, Approval, and Review (Annual & Periodic) Policy.
3. Enhance course content with advanced digital and technological components and regularly review and update textbooks and references to ensure students access current knowledge during their studies.
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5. Incorporate E-Learning into the teaching and assessment policies to be effectively and consistently utilised by staff and students.
6. Develop a mechanism to ensure that students receive prompt constructive feedback on their practical creative work.
7. Incorporate English requirements for all tracks and establishing the submission of a creative portfolio as a mandatory admission criterion for the Graphic Design track.

8. Prioritize recruiting faculty members with advanced qualifications specifically in Graphic Design to ensure subject expertise and improve the quality of course delivery.
9. Expedite the planned move from Microsoft Teams to Moodle to enhance the student learning experience.
10. Further enhance external moderation by increasing the diversity of external moderators across all specializations, enhancing their involvement in the review of assessments and grading, and expanding the percentage of assessments moderated annually.
11. Improve data collection, investigate declining enrolment, and develop strategies to attract and retain students.
12. Undertake a holistic and thorough benchmarking exercise, compiled into a single report, that primarily compares the CMM programme with similar within the country and region, utilizing a range of criteria and metrics as specified in the Benchmarking Policy.
13. Ensure that conducted market and feasibility studies are more rigorous and provide relevant qualitative and quantitative data that would enable senior management to make informed decisions regarding the CMM programme.