

الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



Higher Education Review Unit

Programmes-within-College Reviews

Report

Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy
College of Medical and Health Sciences
Ahlia University
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 1-3 October 2012

Table of Contents

Acronyms	2
1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process.....	3
2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme	7
3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme	11
4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates.....	15
5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	19
6. Conclusion.....	23

Acronyms

AU	Ahlia University
AUQMS	Ahlia University's Quality Management System
BSPT	Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CME	Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPDC	College Programme Development Committee
FSBPT	Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HERU	Higher Education Review Unit
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
LPRS	Long-term Programme Review Schedule
NAQQAET	National Authority of Qualifications and Quality Assurance for Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
TLC	Teaching and Learning Committee

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a ‘limited confidence’ judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, the judgement will be ‘no confidence’, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Ahlia University

A Programmes-within-College review of the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy at the College of Medical and Health Sciences was conducted by HERU of the NAQQAET in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place during 1-3 October 2012 for the academic programme offered by the College, namely the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy (BSPT).

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

AU was notified by the HERU/ NAQQAET on 4 March 2012 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of its College of Medical and Health Sciences with the site visit taking place during 1-3 October 2012. In preparation for the review, AU conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER with appendices on the agreed date on 31 May 2012.

HERU constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of physiotherapy and in higher education that have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised three external reviewers.

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

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

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

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

1.3 Overview of the College of Medical and Health Sciences

Ahlia University is a private university, established in 2001, and licensed by the Government of Bahrain. It is an autonomous institution independently chartered, funded and managed by the private sector. Ahlia University became operational in January 2003. It consists of six Colleges, namely, the College of Arts, Science and Education, the College of Business and Finance, the College of Engineering, the College of Information Technology, the College of Graduate Studies and Research, and the College of Medical and Health Sciences. The latter College offers one programme: the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy

The programme under review, the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy, is located in the College of Medical and Health Sciences. In 2003, AU became the first university in Bahrain to offer an undergraduate programme in physiotherapy. At present, it is the only programme offered by the College. The mission statement of the College of Medical and Health Sciences is to:

1. produce health care professionals who are able to respond effectively to the needs of the community and the region, while remaining sensitive to the socio-cultural values and beliefs.
2. conduct innovative health care research that addresses local, regional and international needs, and advances the frontiers of knowledge.

In the academic year 2010-2011 there were some 124 (111 full-time; 13 part-time) undergraduate students enrolled on the programme, of whom 109 were Bahraini, seven were from other Gulf states and eight from other countries. There were 25 male and 99 female students. The Self-Evaluation Report indicates that there has been steady growth in graduates each year from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011. Over the last three intakes there have been between 20 and 30 students in each intake with a predominance of women and a small number of students who are non-Bahrainis. Students are supported by academic staff, eight of whom are full-time and the others part-time. There are two administrative staff.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

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

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	Confidence

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 The College has a clearly stated Vision, Mission and operational plan that are aligned with the University's Vision, Mission and strategic plan. The aims and objectives of the BSPT programme are clearly identified and published on the university website and further elaborated in the university's strategic plan and the college's operational plan. In 2003, Ahlia University became the first university in Bahrain to offer an undergraduate programme in Physiotherapy. The Bachelor's curriculum was originally based on that offered at Kuwait University and is now patterned on that of Brunel University. The Panel notes that more recently a web-based benchmarking exercise has compared the programme's subject outlines with further universities.
- 2.2 The four-year full-time curriculum is organized to provide academic progression year-on-year with reasonable workloads for students. There is a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills development. However further clinical practice hours, with actual 'hands on' experience in the clinical environment are required. Provided prerequisite courses are passed, students can progress using a summer semester. During interviews, the Panel learned that the students progress from foundation and pre-clinical courses in the first year to clinical education that covers four major specializations, these being orthopaedics, cardiopulmonary, neurology and paediatrics.
- 2.3 The curriculum content meets the requirements for entry-level physiotherapy and a Bachelor degree award. There are appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and published research findings. During the site visit, the Panel learned that course files are available for all courses and are regularly updated by the course instructors. The Panel notes the curriculum review conducted by the College in 2011 and encourages the programme to address its recommendations with regard to streamlining some of the redundant subjects, increasing teaching hours on major subjects, and increasing the clinical hours.
- 2.4 The programme's Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are expressed in the programme specifications and are aligned overall with the mission and programme aims and objectives and are appropriate for the level of the degree. The Panel was informed in interviews that the programme ILOs were prepared in light of the European Physiotherapy Benchmark Statement and the university-wide ILOs for Bachelor's degrees programmes.

- 2.5 The course ILOs, which are derived from the programme ILOs, are developed for all courses and are provided to all students in the course syllabus. A Curriculum Skills Map demonstrates the link between the programme and courses ILOs. The Panel was provided with course files of different courses at different levels; these included foundation, pre-clinical and clinical courses. The Panel scrutinized samples of course files and found the course ILOs to be documented adequately in the course specifications. However, the Panel is of the view that some course ILOs need to be more explicit to physiotherapy and more specific to the aims of each course.
- 2.6 The second, third and fourth year of the BSPT programme make provision for critical clinical education at one hospital and several community clinics. The clinical education contributes to the achievement of programme ILOs and is assessed. The Panel visited the main clinical education site at the Salmaniya Medical Complex where all students undertake their core clinical placements. As is necessary for physiotherapy clinical education, the Complex manages a wide patient population covering the life span and the core clinical areas of cardiorespiratory and thoracic, neurology and musculoskeletal conditions, within all areas, from the acute patient through to those with more chronic conditions. The senior clinical staff responsible for the clinical teaching of the students are also involved in formal academic teaching at the university and therefore are familiar with the students theoretical knowledge and skills ability at any stage. Based on observations of students managing patients, the Panel is of the view that more 'hands on' clinical training hours would strengthen the quality of students graduating from the programme. The Panel notes the College's plans to establish a clinic at the University which will be important in providing students with exposure to a model private practice.
- 2.7 The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme are aligned with the university's Teaching and Learning Plan and support the attainment of the programme's aims and ILOs. The teaching and learning policies are appropriate to support the Bachelor programme. During interviews, the Panel learned that a range of teaching methods are used including, lectures, small group teaching and practical laboratories as well as clinical education. The Panel is of the view that additional opportunities to enable students to participate actively in group discussions and to develop skills in problem identification, analysis and solution would be desirable. Students are exposed to professional practice within the clinical environment and receive adequate clinical orientation in the second pre-clinical year. The Panel notes the development of a Laboratory Manual to aid the students during their clinical practice. Opportunities to practice within a campus-based clinic are planned and strongly supported by the Panel.
- 2.8 The students are encouraged to learn independently and are provided with a comprehensive orientation manual that identifies their personal responsibility for

learning. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that the College provides them with several opportunities to enhance their learning through the use of case studies, group projects, and of e-learning resources (e.g. Access physiotherapy and Highwire Stanford University).

2.9 Suitable assessment policies and procedures are in place and are adequately disseminated to all stakeholders in the University Catalogue, SharePoint and website. Academic staff and students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are aware of the assessment procedures as they are included in their induction and orientation programmes. Examples of formative and summative assessment requirements and students' papers were provided to the Panel; the grading of students' achievements was found to be fair and rigorous. As per the University Student Assessment Manual, students must be provided with prompt feedback on their assessment. During interviews, students informed the Panel that they are comfortable with the feedback they receive and with the opportunity to discuss their achievement with the respective instructors. The Panel encourages the College to heed the advice of the 2011 Curriculum Review with regard to developing further the assessment criteria for the practical and clinical examinations.

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

- The curriculum is organized to provide a good balance between theoretical knowledge and practical skills development.
- A Curriculum Skills Map is used to link the courses ILOs with the programme ILOs.
- A wide range of teaching methods is used to enhance the students' learning experience.
- The students are provided with adequate opportunities to practice within the clinical environment.
- There is a comprehensive Orientation Manual to help the students identify their responsibility for learning.
- Rigorous assessment policies and procedures have been developed and implemented.

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

- review the current clinical practice hours to ensure that students have more 'hands on' experience in the clinical environment.

- further develop the assessment criteria for the practical and clinical examinations.

2.12 Judgement

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

3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 3.1 The admission policy, as reflected in the University admission policy, is clear and available on the university website and university catalogue. During interviews, the Panel learned that there are programme-specific selection criteria which are not yet documented. The Panel suggests that additional programme-specific selection criteria are considered and documented. The Panel also learned that the admission criteria are periodically reviewed and revised as needed.
- 3.2 The performance of the students from the 2009-2010 year to the 2010-2011 year suggests that students selected are capable of completing the programme in minimal time and perform well as shown by the grades achieved. It is clear to the Panel that graduate unemployment is not linked to the quality of students but to the development of Physiotherapy in the country as a whole.
- 3.3 The management of the programme is governed by the university's by-laws. It is evident from the organizational charts that there are clear lines of accountability at the programme, college and university levels. The programme management is also enhanced by regular Departmental Council meetings.
- 3.4 The academic, support and administrative staff are sufficient in number, qualification and professional experience. During interviews, the motivation and commitment of the faculty members to ensure optimal programme delivery were evident to the Panel. A particular strength is the involvement of medical staff in delivering the medical aspects of the learning programme. The Panel was provided with the list of faculty members who are conducting research, publishing and attending conferences. The interviews revealed sufficient staff development initiatives. The Panel encourages the College to strengthen its external collaborations and plans to expose the staff to physiotherapy programmes at other universities.
- 3.5 There are clear policies on recruitment, appraisal and promotion for the staff. Submitted documentation indicates that the staff induction process is comprehensive and sufficient. During interviews, the Panel learned that new faculty members attend the university-wide orientation as well as the college induction. Staff members interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with aspects of their life at AU. While there seems to be sufficient incentive to retain staff, as gleaned from interviews, the Panel suggests that these incentives be documented to ensure the retention of highly qualified staff in the programme.

- 3.6 The University's Admission and Registration (ADREG) software system allows comprehensive access to data as appropriate to each stakeholder. It was evident from the interviews and provided documentation that an extensive range of specialized reports are produced by this system, and that they are used by the senior management in the decision-making processes.
- 3.7 Relevant aspects of the ADREG are accessible to students so that they can view their on-going progress and intervene within a reasonable timeframe. This system is also accessible to staff. During the site visit, the Panel learned that the access to the ADREG system is password-protected and that there are multi-level fail-safes built into the system in order to ensure the security of the learners' information. The Panel was also informed that the server, applications and website software are backed up to a remote site. A disaster recovery plan is also in place and includes plans for the recovery of Systems & Operations, Network & Communications, as well as Computer Laboratories.
- 3.8 The physical and material resources, such as, classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories, IT facilities, library, and learning resources as included in the documentation and viewed during the site visit support optimal student learning in the academic part of the curriculum. The off-campus clinical placement sites complement the College's resources; these include the Salmaniya Medical Complex, health centre as well as some social welfare centres. However, since the programme outcomes are to develop competent clinicians, the Panel is of the view that the clinical training facilities and sites could be widened to ensure graduates become confident clinicians. Emphasis should also be placed on expanding facilities for staff research, which will also support research, by final year students.
- 3.9 The academic programme is supported by a tracking system and a disaster management plan. During the site visit, the Panel learned that the IT staff monitor the usage of e-resources whereas the usage of laboratories and classrooms is tracked by the staff from the Admission and Registration Directorate. Examples of the use of the tracking information in the College's decision-making process was provided to the Panel.
- 3.10 Appropriate student support systems are in place. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that a departmental contact person/coordinator is available to facilitate student access to the library, e-resources and physiotherapy laboratories. The coordinator is also responsible for monitoring and reporting of the malfunctioning of any of these systems on a regular basis. Interviews with different stakeholders revealed that students, clinical, academic and support staff are familiar and satisfied with the student support systems in place.

- 3.11 Introductory and on-going orientation is available to all newly admitted and transfer students. Provided documentation and interviews revealed that the students undergo both a university-wide orientation at the beginning of each semester, and a specific college induction programme. During these programmes, students are introduced to all relevant aspects of the University, such as the staff, facilities and policies. Students interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with the programme's orientation arrangements and indicated that it supports their academic experience. The Panel was pleased to learn that the College evaluates, and reports on the effectiveness of its orientation workshops.
- 3.12 Students' progress is regularly tracked and appropriate support for students who are at-risk of academic failure is provided. The student-focused philosophy of the programme enables close monitoring of their performance. During interviews, the Panel was informed that several mechanisms are employed for the identification of at-risk of failure students; these include the ADREG, academic advising and counselling systems. An example of the use of the ADREG report in the detection of at risk students was provided; however, the presented evidence suggests that poor performers are not identified until the end of the semester. The Panel is of the view that earlier identification of at-risk students will improve success and throughput rates, which would not be difficult to achieve within the small physiotherapy student cohort. The Panel recommends that the College monitor and document its academic support system, to enable the analysis of trends and the development of intervention strategies as appropriate.
- 3.13 In many respects the learning environment is conducive and supportive of the student learning experience. The College provides several opportunities for informal learning; these include the organization of seminars, workshops and extra-curricular activities. Students interviewed by the Panel expressed their satisfaction with these opportunities and indicated that such activities contribute to the enhancement of their learning experience. The Panel encourages the College to proceed with its plans for the establishment of the on-campus clinic as this would further consolidate the students' skills and enhance their clinical training.
- 3.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The College structure is clear and the senior management provides full support to the programme.
 - The Management Information System is comprehensive and effective.
 - There is a good range of specialization in the teaching and support staff.
 - Enthusiastic clinicians support the clinical training of students.

- The staff are well motivated, committed and function as a team.
- A comprehensive orientation is provided to new and transfer students.
- There are appropriate student support systems in place.
- The learning environment is supportive of the students' learning experience.

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

- expand on the clinical training and research facilities
- review and document the process for detecting students at risk so that intervention strategies are implemented timeously.

3.16 **Judgement**

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

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of aims and achieved learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and are ensured through the use of assessment, which is valid and reliable in terms of the learning outcomes.
- 4.2 Benchmarks and internal and external reference points have not been used so far to determine and verify the equivalence of academic standards with other similar programmes in Bahrain as the second programme in the country has only recently begun. International benchmarking has been undertaken to compare the course titles and descriptions of similar physiotherapy programmes in Brunel, Melbourne, Sydney and Southampton universities. Additionally, a comparison of the programme structure and education philosophy was made against the standards of Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy (FSBPT). During interviews, the Panel learned that the outcomes of these international benchmarking exercises have resulted in improvements in the programme's courses. The Panel encourages the College to undertake regional benchmarking with other universities from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in order to gain a regional perspective of physiotherapy programmes, particularly as there are good opportunities for doing so.
- 4.3 Assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, and are made available to all students in the AU Student Assessment Manual. Upon reviewing the provided assessment policies, the Panel is of the view that more detailed assessment criteria are required for practical and clinical assessment. During different interviews, the Panel was informed that the assessment policies are regularly monitored and are subject to annual review.
- 4.4 The College adopts the University-wide ILO-Assessment Matrix in order to align the assessment with the course ILOs. The alignment is verified through internal and external moderation. The Panel is of the view that there needs to be more alignment of assessment with the learning outcomes to assure the academic standards of the graduates.
- 4.5 Examples of internal moderation processes were seen at the site visit. Clear mechanisms have been carried out to ensure alignment of assessment with outcomes through internal verification and internal moderation. There is also evidence of mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation system for setting assessment instruments and grading student achievement.

- 4.6 The external moderation within the University was noted and is satisfactory. There are procedures for the external moderation of assessment, and there are mechanisms to allow for feedback on assessment in line with assessed courses. Upon examining the copy of the external evaluator's report, the Panel is of the view that it needs to be more detailed. The Panel suggests that, in the next iteration of external moderation, more attention is given to the clinical performance of graduating students.
- 4.7 The level of achievements as expressed in samples of students' assessed work is appropriate to the level and type of the programme in Bahrain. However there is no benchmarking of students' achievement with regional countries. Such specific benchmarking would be particularly valuable to gain a clearer regional perspective of student and graduate outcomes. The Panel encourages the College to benefit further from its collaboration with Brunel University by conducting specific benchmarking activities, such as the cross-marking of assignments and projects, in order to gain a critical international perspective of students' comparative performance.
- 4.8 The submitted student assessment documentation indicates that the level of achievement of graduates meets programme aims and ILOs. This is further supported by independent external scrutiny, as there is a high pass rate of graduates (90%) in the National Physiotherapy Licensing examination required by the Ministry of Health before a physiotherapist can practice in Bahrain. The Panel notes with appreciation the achievement of one of the programme's graduates who received a patent and several regional and international awards for her invention of a 'Lower Limb Rehabilitation Device'. This device comprises an assistive lower limb mobilization apparatus for practising normal movement of the hip, knee, and ankle joint during the early stages of rehabilitation.
- 4.9 The ratios of admitted students to successful graduates including rates of progression, retention, year-on-year progression and length of study are satisfactory and comparable with those achieved in other countries. The destinations of graduates are, however, disappointing. Many of the graduates are unemployed and there are limited opportunities for employment as physiotherapists in the public sector in Bahrain. The Panel would like to see the University acting to facilitate the employment of its physiotherapy graduates in order to ensure sustained quality of students and graduates. Information was provided about a small number of graduates who are applying for further study or work abroad.
- 4.10 Clinical education, a vital component of work-based learning in the physiotherapy programme, is supported by appropriate policies and procedures to manage the process and its assessment to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level to meet the ILOs. More detailed information regarding the

formats of clinical assessment is desirable. During interviews with students and clinical assistants, the Panel was informed that mentors are assigned to students to monitor and review their progress.

- 4.11 The physiotherapy programme includes a project component supported by policies and procedures and monitoring of supervision. The responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and the student are elaborated, and there is a mechanism to monitor implementation and improvement. The inclusion of an undergraduate project in the programme, in the Panel's view, provides an opportunity to prepare potential postgraduate research students for the future.
- 4.12 There is a recently appointed College Advisory Board with clear terms of reference. The Advisory Board includes discipline experts, employers and alumni and its feedback systematically informs programme decision-making. During their meeting with the Panel, Board members reported that they have had two meetings during which they reviewed the programme SER and made their recommendations for improvements. The Board members also emphasized that the College needs to attract students from the GCC countries, and to proceed with its plan to offer the M.Sc. in Physiotherapy.
- 4.13 Employers who were surveyed indicated that they are pleased with the standard of the graduates. There is also evidence of graduates' satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile.
- 4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The programme ILOs are achieved, as evidenced from the submitted documentation, interviews and the graduates' results in the national licensing assessments.
 - The assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular review.
 - There are clear and effective mechanisms for internal moderation.
 - There is a high pass rate of graduates in the National Physiotherapy Licensing examination.
 - The inclusion of an undergraduate project in the programme prepares future research students.
 - There is evidence of employers and graduates' satisfaction with the graduates profiles.
- 4.15 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- seek external moderation from regional and international senior physiotherapists
- strengthen the external moderation of exit level subjects
- conduct specific benchmarking activities of students achievements with Brunel University, such as the cross-marking of assignments and projects.

4.16 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 5.1 There is sufficient evidence of documented and publicized policies, procedures and regulations that are concerned with managing both academic and administrative issues across the College. The Panel was provided with copies of the university's Policies and Procedures Manual, Faculty Manual, Student Guide as well as the Academic and Administrative Staff By-laws. During interviews, it was clear that the College staff and students are aware of these policies and procedures as they are included as part of the staff induction and student orientation programmes.
- 5.2 The arrangements for governance, leadership and management are sound and provide a basis for further improvements. The college organizational chart indicates that the programme is managed by an acting Dean, and a Department Chairperson to whom both full-time and part-time staff report directly. Departmental council meetings are conducted regularly to ensure the effective management of the programme. During interviews, the Panel was informed about the decision-making processes at the university and college levels including examples of both top-down decision making (implementation of policies) and bottom-up decision making (changes in programme structure). The Panel was pleased to learn that the senior management at both the University and College levels provide good support for quality improvements in the form of meetings, awareness seminars and workshops.
- 5.3 The quality management at the College is achieved by the implementation of Ahlia University's Quality Management System (AUQMS) which is aligned with the QAAET review indicators, Higher Education Council (HEC) regulations as well as the standards of the respective accreditation bodies. During different interviews, the Panel learned that the College, assisted by the CAQA, implements its quality system by adhering to the processes and templates of the AUQMS. Based on submitted documentation and interviews during the site visit, the Panel is of the view that the College has a strong commitment to the overall improvement of the quality at the College as well as institutional level. The Panel, however, has some concerns regarding the unclear role of the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) in monitoring the quality aspects of the learning programme. The Panel hence suggests that the link of quality management between the TLC, the CAQA and the College is further enhanced and consolidated.
- 5.4 Academic and administrative staff are aware of the quality processes within the College as they regularly attend the training programmes conducted by the CAQA.

During interviews, the staff informed the Panel that they are aware that the quality system is still maturing and that further development and refinement are required. The Panel is pleased to learn that a survey has been conducted to assess the awareness and involvement of the academic staff in the quality assurance processes. The Panel encourages the College to utilize the results of such surveys in the enhancement of the role of the academic staff in the documentation and evaluation of the College's quality system.

- 5.5 The University has developed detailed processes for the development and approval of new programmes. The Panel was informed that the proposal for two new programmes, namely M.Sc. in Physiotherapy and B.Sc. in Paramedics, have been approved by the University Council in 2009 and are awaiting approval by the HEC. During interviews, the Panel learned that the development procedures are initiated by the College's Dean to obtain initial approval from the University Curriculum Committee. Consequently, the College Programme Development Committee (CPDC) proposes the programme curriculum in the light of informal benchmarking, market research, and feedback from academic experts. The Panel is of the view that the College needs to engage more systematically with a wider range of internal and external stakeholder groups during the development of new programmes.
- 5.6 The College established a Programme Review Committee mandated to conduct annual internal programme evaluation and monitoring. During different interviews, the Panel heard several examples of changes made to the programme in light of internal and external feedback. The Panel was provided with an example of changes made in the programme specification as part of this annual review process. The CAQA is also involved in ensuring the quality aspects of the internal review by providing and reviewing the documentation and templates utilized in this process. The Self-Evaluation Report which was produced for the academic year 2011-2012 provides a general overview of the programme provision, but is more descriptive in nature and lacks self-criticism. The Panel recommends that the College approach its next annual reporting process with a more self-critical approach in order to identify and address the significant areas in need of improvement.
- 5.7 The process of programme review is carried out at an institutional level according to the Long-term Programme Review Schedule (LPRS) policy. The aim of this policy is to ensure that all programmes undergo regular cycles of review leading to continuous quality improvements. During interviews the Panel was informed that a College Review Committee (CRC) was established to oversee the implementation of LPRS and evaluate its effectiveness on a regular basis. As the College has only recently commenced the programme review process in February 2012, it is too early to comment on its effectiveness.

- 5.8 The AU Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) coordinates with the College with regard to the collection and analysis of structured comments from various stakeholders including students, employers and graduates. The employers' survey, carried out in April 2012, has shown a considerable level of satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile. Graduates' surveys on the other hand, have shown a reduced degree of satisfaction of the graduates with their jobs. The College might want to consider offering continuing professional development activities to enhance the graduates' career opportunities at an early stage. Students' evaluations of courses are also conducted by the College, recent results of these surveys have shown reduced degree of satisfaction with the practical components of the physiotherapy programme. During interviews, the Panel learned that a comprehensive action plan that addresses feedback from stakeholders is being finalized. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they have the opportunity to meet the college management at any time and verbally convey their complaints. The Panel encourages the College to document the students' verbal complaints and the actions undertaken to resolve them. The enthusiasm displayed by the various range of stakeholders met by the panel members to contribute to the programme improvement is noted.
- 5.9 The University has established an Academic Staff Development Committee mandated to oversee the professional development of the academic staff. During interviews, the Panel learned that academic staff can select to attend any course from the Continuous Professional Development courses list. The Panel was also informed that since February 2012, the faculty's professional development needs have been included in the staff performance appraisals. The Panel notes the support provided by Senior Management for the staff in attending training programmes in topics related to quality assurance. This support represents a commendable commitment to the overall improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. The Panel recommends that the College develop a comprehensive staff professional development plan based on needs assessment, one that ensures the evaluation of the effectiveness of training programmes.
- 5.10 The divergent input from stakeholders, particularly the College Advisory Board and professional practitioners in the industry, is used to ensure the programme's relevance to the labour market. The programme's engagement with the Ministry of Health and the Bahrain Physical Therapy Association further enhances the community's trust in the academic programme. The Panel recommends that the College conducts a survey to scope the labour market in order to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and relevant.
- 5.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There is an evident commitment of the college's senior management for the development of the quality system.
- The college's policies, procedures and regulations are well documented and publicized.
- The governance, leaderships and management arrangements are sound.
- The graduates, students and other stakeholders are actively involved in the programme evaluation and improvement.
- The staff development programmes are encouraged and supported by the College.

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

- adopt a more self-critical and analytical approach to its annual self-evaluation process
- develop and implement a comprehensive professional development plan with regular assessment of its impact
- conduct a survey to scope the labour market to ensure the relevance of the physiotherapy programme.

5.13 **Judgement**

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

6. Conclusion

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

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy of College of Medical and Health Sciences offered by Ahlia University.