# Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
## Programme Review Report

**University of Bahrain**
**College of Business Administration**
**Master of Business Administration**
**Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 16–18 May 2022**
**Extension Visit Date: 4 December 2023**

HA100-C3-R100

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# Acronyms

| AACSB | Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------|
| BQA | Education & Training Quality Authority |
| CILO | Course Intended Learning Outcome |
| CoB | College of Business Administration |
| CSB | Civil Service Bureau |
| DHR | Directorate of Higher Education Reviews |
| CGPA | Cumulative Grade Point Average |
| HEC | Higher Education Council |
| HRM | Human Resource Management |
| IT | Information Technology |
| MBA | Master of Business Administration |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| PAC | Programme Advisory Committee |
| PEO | Programme Educational Objective |
| PILO | Programme Intended Learning Outcome |
| QA | Quality Assurance |
| QAAC | Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre |
| SAC | Students Advisory Committee |
| SER | Self-Evaluation Report |
| SIS | Student Information System |
| UILO | University Intended Learning Outcome |
| UoB | University of Bahrain |
| UTEL | Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership |

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# 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 judgments 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 judgment, 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 | |

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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.

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# II. The Programme's Profile

| | |
|---|---|
| Institution Name* | University of Bahrain |
| College/ Department* | College of Business Administration |
| Programme/ Qualification Title* | Master of Business Administration |
| Qualification Approval Number | University Council Decision No (307/2020) of 18 June 2020 |
| NQF Level | 9 |
| Validity Period on NQF | 5 years from the validation date |
| Number of Units* | 9 |
| NQF Credit | 132 |
| Programme Aims* | 1. Demonstrate in-depth expertise with Business literature and functional applications. <br><br> 2. Articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and confidently in various business settings. <br> 3. Analyze business concerns and procedures from an ethical and global vantage point. <br> 4. Exhibit problem-Solving and leadership abilities necessary to provide consultancies through rigorous research. |
| Programme Intended Learning Outcomes* | a. Utilize a holistic approach to solving real-world business problems by bringing together knowledge across corporate functions. <br><br> b. Generate sound management solutions using scientific research and critical thinking skills. <br> c. Exhibit leadership by making judgments and consultancies that are ethical and socially responsible for organizations. <br> d. Articulate the current issues of global business situations and future outlooks. |

* Mandatory fields

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## III. Judgement Summary

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The Programme's Judgement:<br>
Confidence
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| Standard/ Indicator | Title | Judgement |
|---|---|---|
| **Standard 1** | **The Learning Programme** | **Satisfied** |
| Indicator 1.1 | The Academic Planning Framework | Addressed |
| Indicator 1.2 | Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes | Partially Addressed |
| Indicator 1.3 | The Curriculum Content | 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 | 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 | Partially 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 | Not Applicable |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 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 | Partially Addressed |
| Indicator 4.4 | Benchmarking and Surveys | Addressed |
| Indicator 4.5 | Relevance to Labour Market and Societal Needs | Addressed |

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# IV. Standards and Indicators

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## Standard 1

### The Learning Programme

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

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### 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- The University of Bahrain (UoB) has a set of regulations and a clear planning process in place to ensure that its programmes are relevant and fit for purpose. The Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme was first launched in 2008 and revisions were made to the curriculum in 2020, based on feedback received from alumni, employers, faculty members and current students. A market study involving a web-based survey of alumni, employers and experts which aiming to 'validate the transformation of the MBA programme' was conducted in 2019-2020. This was followed by a college-wide stakeholder conference in June 2021 to obtain additional feedback about the revised programme. This ongoing input from key stakeholders ensures that the MBA remains relevant and fit for purpose.

- The Panel was provided with the MBA Risk Register which identifies several potential risks related to the programme, including staff retention and reduced funding. During interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that the risks related to the quality of the programme, its delivery and academic standards are being monitored and mitigated with the involvement of other units at the University.

- The programme title is concise and indicative of the type and content of an MBA qualification. It is accurately documented on the university's website, the Programme Specification document and the samples of certificates and transcripts that were provided the Panel. As per the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the MBA adheres to the design requirements of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as well as the related mapping and confirmation processes.

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- The programme has four Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) *in lieu* of programme aims, which contribute to the achievement of the missions and strategic goals of UoB and the College of Business (CoB). During the Extension Visit, the Panel learned that the PEOs were revised as part of a benchmarking exercise that was recently conducted to ensure that the PEOs are appropriate for an MBA programme, aligned with the revised programme curriculum, and include references to relevant skills such as leadership, strategic thinking, multi-disciplinary problem solving and decision making, which are all typical *foci* of MBA programmes internationally. The Panel is of the view that the changes made to the PEOs are broadly appropriate for the MBA programme. However, the Panel notes that the PEOs are still expressed as learning outcomes rather than programme objectives. Therefore, the Panel suggests that the College consider rephrasing the PEOs to ensure that they are articulated in a form appropriate for their type as PEOs.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Partially Addressed*

- UOB has six University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs) that are *de facto* graduate attributes. The programme contributes fully to the achievement of the UILOs. During the Site Visit, the Panel noted that the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are generally appropriate for an MBA, however, they needed to be reviewed and revised for better alignment with the revised MBA curriculum and content. Furthermore, some of the PILOs were not clearly written and easily measurable, and there were no PILOs related to decision-making which is a key skill taught in an MBA programme. In addition, no PILOs referenced innovation, entrepreneurship and data analytics, despite these areas being covered extensively in the MBA programme as core courses (MGT632, QM651).

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel learned that the College has revised the PILOs and reduced them from eight to four outcomes. The Panel notes that the first three revised PILOs are appropriate and focus on solving real-world problems, generating solutions using research and exhibiting ethical leadership. However, the fourth PILO requires further revision because MBA students should be able to do more than 'articulate' current global issues. They must also be able to understand and evaluate the impact of these issues on business. The Panel also notes that the mapping of the revised PILOs is not in full alignment with the updated PEOs. For example, the third PILO is not mapped to the third PEO despite being related. The Panel was informed during the Extension Visit that the PILOs had not yet been formally approved by the relevant University committees, but that this process is underway. The Panel is of the view that the changes made to the PILOs are

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generally appropriate. The Panel also recommends that the College should ensure that the revised PILOs are appropriately mapped to updated PEOs.

- The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) were examined by the Panel during the Site Visit and found to be lacking in a number of areas. For example, some CILOs were poorly worded and difficult to understand and measure. In some courses, relevant CILOs were missing and some CILOs were double-barreled and overly complex. The CILOs were also not always reflective of the course contents. Furthermore, the Panel examined the mapping of the CILOs to PILOs in the provided course syllabi and found that some of the CILOs were incorrectly mapped to the PILOs.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel noticed that all the CILOs have been benchmarked and revised as shown in the updated course syllabi. The Panel examined the CILOs in all of the courses and found them to be appropriate, relevant and measurable in the majority of cases. Exceptions were noted in ACC611 (CILO 1 focuses only on cost management systems, while CILOs 2 and 5 both only require students to 'discuss' rather than 'apply'); MGT632 (CILO 1 requires students to 'criticize' but this requires knowledge of the theories); MGT635 (CILOs 1, 2 and 4 have duplication) and QM650 (CILO 3 needs to be clarified). The Panel also noted that CILO 2 in QM650 differed in the syllabi submitted by UoB for the MBA and the the Master of Science in Human Resource Management programme (MHRM) programme. Overall, the Panel is satisfied with the progress made as of the Extension Visit and advises the College to consider reviewing the CILOs of the few courses mentioned above.

- The Panel noted that all the provided course syllabi, during the Extension Visit, contain references to eight PILOs in the CILO to PILO mapping matrix, and not the four revised PILOs. The Panel was informed that a full mapping of CILOs to PILOs had not yet been undertaken because the revised PILOs were not yet formally approved, and that appropriate mapping matrices would be included in the syllabi in due course. The Panel acknowledges that the revisions to learning outcomes are subject to relevant institutional approval processes and recommends that the College should review and update the mapping of CILOs to PILOs to ensure that it is complete and accurate.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

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- The study plan is available in the Programme Specification and shows that students need two years (four semesters) to complete the MBA in full time mode. During the first three semesters, students take three courses in each semester and in the final semester they complete a consultancy project. All of the courses are three credit hours (except the project which is 6 credit hours). There are no pre-requisites listed in the Programme Specification document for any of the courses, although MGT638 has 'completion of 12 credits' listed in the Course Specification and MGT694 (the capstone consulting project) requires students to complete at least 18 credits before they can enroll. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the progression of courses is appropriate in terms of NQF levels and credits, with suitable student workload.

- The examination of the Course Specifications, during the Site Visit, demonstrates that there is appropriate coverage of theoretical concepts which is complemented with the use of practical artefacts and learning methods such as case studies, videos and guest speakers. During the Extension Visit, the Panel learned that the MBA curriculum was updated based on the benchmarking exercise that was recently undertaken by adding a course on Human Resources Management (MGT631) which is also part of the MHRM curriculum. Minor changes were also made to the pre-requisites of three other courses (QM651, MGT635 and MGT638) to facilitate student progression and ensure students have the required knowledge in each course. Feedback from the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) and Students Advisory Committee (SAC) was also taken into consideration in making the changes.

- The textbooks and references listed in the Course Specifications are generally current and appropriate, although some of the supplementary reading materials are more than 10 years old. Overall, the Panel found the learning materials used in the MBA to be appropriate for the programme.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- UoB has an appropriate Teaching and Learning Policy. According to the MBA Course Specifications, a range of teaching methods are deployed to deliver courses, including lectures, class discussions, guest speakers, videos, case studies, presentations and peer learning. The Panel appreciates the use of a variety of teaching and learning methods on the MBA programme to enhance the learning experience.

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- UoB does not have a separate e-learning policy, however, the Teaching and Learning Policy calls for integrating technology into the learning experience 'to support delivery, engagement and assessment'. During the global pandemic, all of the MBA courses were delivered online based on the 'Instructions for e-learning during the Precautionary Period'. The shift to e-learning was supported through workshops by the Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership (UTEL) and UoB's E-Learning Centre.

- During the Site Visit, the Panel noted that prior to 2021-2022, every MBA course was delivered over a 15-week semester, with students attending a three-hour evening class every week. This was replaced with a block-teaching approach, whereby every MBA course is taught in two extended weekend blocks, with students having 17.5 hours of instruction in a three-day period (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) over two consecutive weeks. This change has resulted in a 15-week/45-hour MBA course being reduced to 35 hours over 10 days, with no change to the CILOs or assessments. The Panel was concerned with the effectiveness of this intensive approach since working students are placed under pressure to complete assessments and not given sufficient time for reflection to enable the attainment of learning outcomes. These concerns were echoed by students in interviews that were conducted during the Site Visit and in the Course Evaluation Reports for the 2021-2022 academic year. The Panel was informed that no formal study or comparison had been undertaken to verify whether the block teaching delivery mode is more effective in terms of student performance and satisfaction. The Panel is of the view that the use of block teaching on postgraduate programmes is an accepted practice, the total number of learning hours, as reflected in the credit value of a course, needs to be retained and teaching blocks need to be more spread out in order to allow enough time for reflection and assessments.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel learned that the CoB did not evaluate the block teaching mode for effectiveness and modify it to ensure that it is consistent with the total learning hours required and that it enables students to attain the CILOs and PILOs, in line with the Panel's recommendation that was sent to CoB after the Site Visit. The Panel was informed that the block-teaching mode has been replaced with a regular weekly class for every course. The Panel explored how this change was introduced during interviews and found that all MBA courses are now offered over the full duration of the semester but still held on weekends to accommodate working students. Staff expressed their satisfaction with the change which allowed students more time to reflect on their learning and complete their assessments, while students also had a favourable response as evidenced by the annual student survey results that were provided during the Extension Visit.

- The Panel noted that many of the teaching methods listed in the Course Specifications, such as group discussions, presentations and projects, are participative and student-centred, and expose students to professional practice through case studies and videos. Furthermore, in response to students' feedback, the College has developed an action plan

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to increase their exposure to industry practices and practical assessments. The Panel is of the view that having more applied assessments will ensure that more informal and non-formal learning opportunities will be integrated into the MBA programme. Furthermore, the adoption of a consultancy capstone project provides a springboard for deploying these types of learning opportunities and initiatives. A course on innovation (MGT632) is also part of the MBA curriculum. These elements of the programme are also aimed at strengthening students' research capabilities and enabling them to design innovative solutions to business problems in their project.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- UoB has adopted an outcomes-based assessment approach which is outlined in its IDEAS Handbook. The provisions for moderation of assessments are outlined in the Assessment Moderation Policy. The University also has Study and Examination Regulations and a Teaching and Learning Policy, which call for the use of formative and summative assessments. Although UoB claims to adopt formative and summative assessments on the MBA programme, the Panel established that continuous assessments were considered formative, even though the marks awarded for these assessments contribute towards the final grade. The Panel advises CoB to adopt clear definitions for formative and summative assessments. In addition, the Panel notes that while some assessments had clear marking criteria and rubrics (e.g. MGT630, MKT660 and QM650 projects), others did not (e.g. MGT638 project). The Panel advises CoB to ensure that all assessments have clear marking criteria and rubrics.

- Ethics and principles of scientific research are taken into account by requiring students to seek formal approval of any surveys or questionnaires used for primary data collection. Furthermore, students are required to sign a pledge that they will adopt an ethical approach in their research and uphold academic integrity. The Teaching and Learning Policy also requires that academic integrity is upheld. This is achieved through the provisions and deployment of the Anti-Plagiarism Policy and the use of plagiarism detection mechanisms, such as Turnitin. The Regulations of Study and Examinations at UoB detail the procedure to be followed for academic appeals. The procedure is also made available to students in the UoB Student Guide which can be found on the University's website. Over the last three years, there were 47 appeals made by MBA students, of which 35 were in two courses – 'Research Methods and Statistical Analysis' (QM650) (19 appeals) and 'Business Ethics' (MGT635) (16 appeals). Only five appeals were upheld. The Panel recommends that UoB should investigate the reasons for the large number of appeals by

MBA students in the 'Research Methods and Statistical Analysis' and the 'Business Ethics' courses and address any underlying issues that are contributing to this anomaly.

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# 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.*

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## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- UoB has admission procedures which specify the entry requirements for all its programmes. UoB website and the MBA Programme Study Plan list the admission requirements for the programme. During the interviews with administrative and academic staff, they confirmed that the admission requirements ensure that appropriate students are accepted on an equal basis between females and males, and that the admission procedures are consistently implemented.

- As per the admission requirements, students who do not have a business background are required to study three foundation courses in Accounting (ACCM500), Economics (ECONM500) and Finance (FINM500) before they can start the MBA courses. Approximately 50% of admitted students every year do the foundation courses. The Course Specifications were examined by the Panel and were found to be appropriate as 'bridging' courses to ensure students without a business background are provided with the prerequisite knowledge to study an MBA programme.

- UoB's Study and Examination Regulations clearly spell out the rules and procedures to be followed for internal and external transfers. Administrative staff confirmed during interviews that the transfer procedures were followed and that external transfers to postgraduate programmes were rare.

- The Panel requested evidence of admission criteria being reviewed and was informed that in 2021 conditional admission was introduced, and the Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) requirement was lowered to 2.33 provided that the students register for three 'background' courses in the first semester and pass them with a minimum grade of 'B'. However, these amendments have not been reflected in all the related documents and it

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was not clear to the Panel why these amendments were made. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the College should regularly benchmark and revise the admission requirements in light of student performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Partially Addressed*

- UoB has appropriate policies and procedures in place for staff recruitment, appraisal and promotions, which are governed by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) regulations. The policies are available on the university's website and disseminated transparently to stakeholders. The promotions regulations and criteria are used in faculty promotions for which a college-level Promotions Committee has been created. As confirmed during the virtual interviews, four CoB academic staff were promoted between 2017 and 2020.

- CoB applies the university's Scientific Research Regulations which are implemented at the college-level by the Graduate Studies and Research Committee of which the MBA Programme Coordinator is a member. CoB aims to have 68 research papers indexed in Scopus and 50 funded research projects by 2024. As per the provided evidence, this will be achieved by recruiting research-active faculty, encouraging the development of research groups and other initiatives that have been identified, although, they will need to be supported with adequate funding. The Panel was provided with details of six faculty members' publications along with the faculty CVs which showed that some faculty members were more research active than others. The Panel suggests that UoB examines the reasons for this disparity in research outputs and provides appropriate incentives to faculty members who are less research active to engage in scholarly activities.

- Faculty workload in CoB has been raised as an area for improvement in academic staff surveys due to high administrative workloads. Faculty members who teach on the MBA programme also teach on other CoB programmes. The use of 'flipped classrooms' has been suggested as a means of reducing workloads. Programme Coordinators do not get any teaching relief, despite their additional administrative responsibilities. In 2019, the teaching staff to student ratio in the CoB was 1:56 and the College has set a target to reduce this to 1:35 by 2024. All faculty members are academic advisors with 80 or more students allocated to them. During interviews with staff, the Panel learned that some faculty are advising up to 120 students. In addition to teaching and academic advising, academic staff are expected to produce Scopus indexed research papers, participate in various departmental, college and institutional committees, ensure that all activities related to

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quality assurance at the course and programme levels are completed, develop their teaching skills through professional development courses organised by UTEL, and participate in community outreach activities. The Panel was informed that Tuesdays every week are teaching-free days to allow faculty to focus on research, however, during interviews, it was found that in practice Tuesdays are used to 'catch up' on overdue work. The Panel was concerned with the overall workload of academic staff which does not allow for sufficient time to engage in research and other important scholarly activities. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should develop an effective mechanism for ensuring appropriate and balanced academic staff workloads are developed and implemented as a priority in order to maintain teaching quality and academic standards on the programme.

- Staff turnover is monitored and the rate in the Department of Management and Marketing over the past five years has been low, with three faculty members leaving during this period. There were 76 full-time faculty members in the CoB in 2021-2022, of which eight were involved in teaching MBA courses. An examination of their CVs shows that they have appropriate qualifications and expertise to teach on the programme.

- UTEL is responsible for professional development training of faculty and is supported by other units, such as Information Technology (IT) Centre, E-Learning Centre, library, and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC), for specialised training and seminars. The Panel was informed during interviews and provided with evidence of a number of internal and external professional development workshops, seminars and training programmes. Although UoB does not offer any professional development training aimed specifically at faculty teaching on postgraduate programmes, the Panel learned during interviews that UTEL organsies bespoke workshops, which are externally facilitated, if required and the Panel was provided with examples of these for the CoB. Despite this, the Panel found limited capacity building for research supervision. Feedback from the SAC indicates that there is a need to improve supervision, and this is further reinforced by the long time it takes students to complete their capstone project/thesis. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UoB should enhance faculty capacity for supervising research theses and projects through the implementation of effective relevant professional development programmes.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

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- The College has 36 classrooms, with capacities ranging from 35 to 100 and five multipurpose halls. Students have access to relevant IT facilities including eight shared computer laboratories in the CoB and a campus-wide Wi-Fi connection. From interviews, the Panel learned that student satisfaction with IT facilities is evaluated using the general UoB Student Survey which is not programme specific. IT concerns were not raised by the SAC, however the Faculty Survey highlights the need to improve the IT environment by upgrading the IT infrastructure and providing more IT training workshops. The Panel was informed that the IT Centre had developed a roadmap to address the IT issues.

- The MBA students have access to the main library at the Sakhir campus, which houses the majority of materials relevant to business programmes. There are more than 300,000 volumes in print and 27,000 e-journals available through eight databases such as ScienceDirect, Scopus, IEEE and Springer. According to the SER, more than 26,000 resources are relevant to CoB's programmes. Student satisfaction with the library provision is evaluated through different surveys, including the Student Experience Survey, however programme-specific data is not available.

- UoB has a Health Centre on campus and appropriate health and safety policies and procedures in place which are applied within the CoB through the Infrastructure, Health and Safety Committee. In all, the Panel is satisfied that current arrangements are robust. While it was evident to the Panel from interviews with staff members that the resources are maintained and readily available, their adequacy for the MBA programme also needs to be monitored through survey mechanisms (see Indicator 4.4).

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- UoB uses the Student Information System (SIS) to manage student enrolments and personal and academic records. The system was demonstrated to the Panel during the Site Visit and consists of nine modules including admissions, registration, fees, academic advising, grades, student appeals, course evaluations and graduation. The Panel confirmed during the virtual interviews that the data on the system is used to generate a range of reports and enables informed decision-making. Furthermore, UoB uses the Blackboard virtual learning environment for storing and delivering course materials and managing student assessment. Microsoft Teams has also been utilised for online teaching during the global pandemic. The Panel confirmed during the interviews that the use of

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the e-learning systems and related resources is monitored automatically based on system-generated data.

- UoB has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of learner's records and the accuracy of academic results, which are available on the university's website and deployed by the IT Centre. As confirmed during the interviews, the system is regularly backed-up and audits are undertaken to assure the integrity of the data. The Panel was provided with samples of the certificates awarded to MBA graduates along with transcripts showing their results, all of which were found to be accurate and contain relevant information. The Panel also learned from alumni that they received their certificates and transcripts in a timely manner after graduating.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Partially Addressed*

- UoB students are provided with adequate support in terms of library, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, guidance and care. During the interviews, the Panel learned that the library is involved in student inductions and organises a number of information literacy and other workshops on digital resources. Similarly, the IT and E-Learning Centres offer training on IT resources and facilities and provide laptops to students who need them. The Panel notes that MBA students were generally aware of the support offered to them. Female students are suitably accommodated as indicated during the interviews. Students with special needs are also supported through the Deanship of Student Affairs but currently, there are no students with special needs on the MBA programme.

- Although UoB has a Career Counselling Office, the SER does not address how MBA students are provided with career guidance and support. The Panel requested more information about the career services that MBA students had access to and was informed that this was 'not applicable' since the majority of MBA students are already employed. Students and graduates confirmed in interviews that they are not given any guidance with careers, although they agreed that having an MBA degree had enhanced their career prospects. According to the results of the university's Graduate Destination Survey, there is a need for enhancing career support. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should provide appropriate and effective career support services to MBA students to help them accomplish their professional goals and aspirations.

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- The Deanship of Students' Affairs' Guidance and Counselling Department organises an Induction Day for all new UoB students at the start of every academic year. An additional induction event for MBA students is held within CoB by the MBA Programme Coordinator and introduces them to the programme and relevant policies and regulations. The Academic Advising Regulations detail the support that needs to be provided to students by their assigned academic advisors. The Panel was informed during interviews that MBA students make limited use of academic advising resources, preferring to contact their thesis supervisor or instructors directly, or the MBA Programme Coordinator.

- The Panel learned from interviews that at-risk students are identified by their CGPA through the SIS, although a report of these students is not generated for the MBA programme. The Panel requested information about the number of at-risk students on the programme over the last three years and was provided with data by semester. The highest number of at-risk students was in Fall of 2018-2019 (22 students). By Fall of 2021-2022, this number had dropped to eight, however it remains comparatively high with only 38 students enrolled in the programme. The limited use of academic advising and regular follow-up of students on the MBA programme, as detailed above, may have contributed to this. Therefore, the Panel recommends that CoB should deploy the existing academic advising procedures more effectively in order to reduce the number of at-risk students on the programme.

- The adequacy and student satisfaction with student support services is assessed using institutional survey instruments such as the Student Experience Survey and the Exit Survey, however, these surveys do not collect programme-specific data, and some have not been administered in postgraduate programmes (see also Indicator 4.4). Nevertheless, staff interviewed during the Site Visit were able to provide examples of general improvements that had been made to support services in response to student feedback, including assisting students with accessing library resources remotely during the pandemic and providing IT support during online teaching.

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# 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.*

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## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- The MBA programme uses different types of assessment methods to evaluate student learning and to ensure that academic standards are met. An assessment schedule is defined for each course and consists of different assessment instruments, most of which are research-based. However, with the shift to a consultancy capstone project and an increased emphasis on industry needs, the Panel noted that the assessment schedule needs to be reviewed to include more practical/ applied assessments. This issue was also raised by the interviewed students and alumni during the Site Visit. External stakeholders have also emphasized on this matter during interviews, confirming that the MBA graduates were resilient and hard-working, however, needed better critical thinking, problem-solving and communication skills.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel was provided with the revised course syllabi, samples of course portfolios and samples of students' work and practical assessments. The Panel was also provided with the revised assessment plan, which requires that students complete an applied research project as well as engagement activities in every course. The Panel is of the view that the changes made to the assessments are appropriate.

- The alignment of assessments with learning outcomes is achieved by mapping assessments with CILOs, which are then mapped to PILOs and UILOs. The mapping matrices are included in every Course Specification. Overall, the mapping is adequate notwithstanding the issues raised in Indicator 1.2 related to the CILOs and PILOs. Graduates' achievements of PILOs are reported through Course Assessment Forms and the Assurance of Learning (AoL) process at the programme level. Course Assessment Forms detail student performance on every CILO, based on their results in the assessments mapped to that CILO. The AoL process, which is part of the CoB's Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation requirement, identifies specific courses to be used for assessing the achievement of PILOs and maps the assessments in

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those courses to the PILOs so that the percentage of students who achieve the PILOs can be determined.

- There are mechanisms in place for monitoring the implementation and improvement of the assessment process, which include regular reviews of the course portfolios submitted by the faculty members at the end of each academic semester. Assessment processes are also monitored through Course Evaluation Surveys, Course Assessment Forms and Course Evaluation Reports. Student performance data and survey feedback collected and reported on in these mechanisms provide insights into the effectiveness of the assessments. The Panel was provided with examples of minor changes made to assessments in interviews, the most significant being the replacement of the thesis with a consultancy project.

## 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).*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- The Study and Examinations Regulations and the Anti-Plagiarism Policy lay the foundations for academic integrity for both students and staff. The policy and related procedures are widely disseminated through the Student Handbook available on the UoB website and in student induction presentations. The Panel found a sound awareness of this information amongst the interviewed students and alumni.

- At UoB, students are required to submit assignments *via* SafeAssign which is integrated into Blackboard and used to detect plagiarism. During the Blackboard demonstration, the Panel noted that many assessments on the MBA programme did not make use of SafeAssign. It was explained that students were able to directly access SafeAssign without using Blackboard. However, interviews with students revealed that the use of plagiarism detection tools on the MBA programme was limited. While all students were aware of the importance of academic integrity and understood how to avoid it, they did not know about the penalties for plagiarism. The Panel requested data about the number of academic misconduct cases over the last three years. The response received was that there were no cases.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel noticed that the College included an Academic Integrity Statement in all of the course syllabi. The statement is general in nature and requires students to be 'honest and ethical at all times'. It also states that 'Any breach of academic integrity will be dealt with according to the 'University Regulations for

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Professional Conduct Violations' but does not mention the Anti-Plagiarism Policy or the penalties for plagiarism. A training workshop for all faculty members on preventing and detecting plagiarism was held in November 2022, while students embarking on their research thesis were given a workshop on research skills that included critical writing skills. As evidence of implementation, samples of Originality Reports from Safe Assign were provided. The Panel was also informed during the Extension Visit that minor instances of plagiarism are dealt with by individual faculty reducing marks, while major cases are reported through the formal channels.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Partially Addressed*

- UoB has had an Assessment Moderation Policy since 2015, but it has only been implemented on the MBA programme starting from 2021-2022. Internal moderators are appointed by the Head of the Department based on a rolling plan. Samples of filled in forms were provided which showed limited critical evaluation. No recommendations for improvement were noted in the Assessment and Moderation Committee's Reports. The Panel explored this during the Site Visit and found that there was an awareness amongst faculty and staff involved in Quality Assurance (QA) that the internal moderation process was not producing the intended results. To address this, the Panel was told that the moderation forms had recently been revised. However, an examination of the forms submitted with the SER and after the revision showed that they were almost entirely identical. In the Panel's view, the problem lies with the way in which the forms are filled in, rather than the form structure and criteria. Faculty also indicated during interviews that they would like to be educated better about the moderation process.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel found evidence on a training session about effective internal moderation being held in November 2022. Further evidence of implementation was provided in the form of samples of filled in internal moderation forms and more examples of changes made based on moderator's feedback were described to the Panel in the Extension Visit. The Panel is satisfied that the progress made in this area will result in more effective moderation processes leading to continuous improvement of the courses.

- During the Site Visit, the Panel was informed that UoB's External Moderation Policy was not implemented at the programme level. During the Extension Visit, evidence was provided on the external moderation of only one course MGT630. The Panel explored this in the interviews and was informed that this was due to the timeframe and that a rolling

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plan was in place for the other courses. The Panel was also informed that local and regional HEIs were contacted to act as external moderators.

- The Panel notes that unlike internal moderation, which is assessment-based, the external moderator evaluates the entire course from a macro perspective using two separate forms developed for this purpose. The Panel was informed during the Extension Visit that these forms were being consolidated to avoid duplication. The Panel also notes that the external moderation is undertaken after the students' grades had been declared. While this is aligned with external course review purposes, it does not allow for any changes to be made to students' grades if the external moderators detect marking practices that are not rigorous. The Panel recommends that the College should continue implementing external moderation on the MBA courses and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the programme's external moderation to ensure consistent assessments and fairness of grading.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Not Applicable*

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- In 2021-2022, the MBA thesis course (MGT695) was replaced with a capstone consultancy project course (MGT694). The Panel learned during interviews that the consultancy project was introduced to enhance students' practical skills in a real-world setting. The project learning outcomes have been mapped to the PILOs and contribute towards the achievement of all PILOs which is appropriate for a capstone course.

- The supervision arrangements for the consultancy project are detailed in the Course Specification, and briefly in the capstone project guidelines and the Thesis Writing Handbook. Every MBA student has an allocated project supervisor. Faculty members supervise between one and six students every semester. The need for more professional

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development opportunities to develop the supervision capacity on the programme has been discussed previously (see Indicator 2.2). This will further clarify the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and facilitate the timely completion of the capstone project.

- The Postgraduate Student Follow-up Report is used to monitor and review the progress of students. While useful to track and record a student's status, the form consists mainly of check boxes and does not include any commentary, which would be useful in cases of delays. During the Extension Visit, the Panel was provided a Student Assessment of Thesis Supervision form that has been recently developed to measure students' satisfaction with the thesis/ capstone consultancy project and their supervisor. The Panel sought evidence of its implementation and was provided with forms filled in by students and supervisors that demonstrated students' progress on the capstone project was being adequately monitored. Furthermore, students have been provided with a comprehensive workshop on research skills aimed at facilitating their progress on the capstone project.

- The SER describes the arrangements for assessing the thesis, which include an examination panel consisting of the supervisor, an internal examiner and an external examiner to examine the written thesis. The rigour of the assessment process is confirmed by the research papers that have been published by students upon completing their thesis. Completed consultancy projects had not yet been submitted by students, however, the Panel was assured during the interviews that a similar assessment process would be followed for the newly introduced consultancy project. The Panel advises CoB to include an industry expert on the examination panel for the consultancy project.

- The capstone consultancy project has not yet been evaluated for effectiveness based on stakeholder feedback and student performance. A formal evaluation process is required to ensure that the project is contributing appropriately to the achievement of the learning outcomes. This evaluation can be integrated into the annual and the periodic reviews of the programme. The Panel, therefore, recommends that appropriate mechanisms are deployed to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the capstone consultancy project and related arrangements, and to make improvements to the process.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Partially Addressed*

- The Panel viewed samples of student work available in the Course Portfolios and found them to be appropriate in terms of the complexity level and meet the academic standards of the programme. Furthermore, during the Extension Visit, the Panel noticed that

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progress has been made in the processes and instruments that are applied to evaluate students' achievements. Diverse assessments are currently used on the programme to assess the CILOs and PILOs (see Indicator 3.1).

- During the Site Visit, the Panel was provided with year-on-year progression data for the period from 2017 to 2021, which showed low progression rates in some years. Students on the MBA took, on average, seven to eight semesters to complete the programme which was excessive for full-time study at Master level. Due to the long completion times, the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates on the programme has been low. Between 2017-2018 and 2021-2022, 135 students were registered in the MBA programme and only 31 (or 23%) had graduated. While retention is high, students are taking a long time to finish the programme, which is inconsistent with similar programmes internationally. A typical MBA programme requires two years of full-time study, whereas at UoB, the majority of students need double that time. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the replacement of the thesis with the capstone consultancy project is likely to mitigate the long period of time students took to complete the research thesis. Nevertheless, the Panel recommends that UoB should investigate the reasons for the inordinately long period of time MBA students take to complete the programme and implement appropriate strategies to mitigate this.

- During the Site visit, the Panel noted that the Graduate Destination Survey is used to monitor graduate destinations of CoB graduates. The latest survey from 2021 had only six respondents from the MBA (out of 263 graduates). More than 80% of them were employed. While these findings are laudable, the small number of respondents limits their validity. The Panel also noted that the Employer Survey is not administered for the MBA programme and is done at the college level only. There is also limited contact with employers of MBA students and graduates, except for a small number who are members of the PAC. Moreover, the interviews with external stakeholders indicated to the Panel that better mechanisms need to be deployed to collect feedback from employers and graduates to improve the MBA programme. In response to the Panel's recommendations that were sent to CoB after the Site Visit, the College conducted a postgraduate alumni survey and an employer survey to collect feedback from these stakeholders about the MBA programme. The data from the surveys was filtered by programme in order to obtain more pertinent programme-level feedback (see Indicator 4.4).

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## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- UoB has a suite of appropriate institutional policies and regulations for the needs of the programme that have been developed by the QAAC. The polices include the dates of revisions which indicate that they are regularly revised. As provided during interviews, most of the policies are available on the UoB website and they are communicated to stakeholders in relevant handbooks and through e-mail. The Panel noticed from interviews that staff members involved in the MBA programme have an understanding of the QA system and their role within the system. Staff also participate in workshops related to quality matters.

- At the college level, the Quality Assurance Office, together with the departmental Quality Assurance Committees, is responsible for all QA matters related to the MBA programme. The procedures to be followed are specified in the Quality Manual and relevant policies and regulations. The Panel was provided with minutes of the departmental QA Committee meetings for the last two years, as well as copies of relevant reports, such as Course Evaluation Reports, AoL Reports, Survey Reports; Self Evaluation Reports and Audit Reports.

- The Panel was informed during the Site Visit that the deployment of the QA management system is monitored by the College QA Director using the QA operational plan which contains a detailed listing of all activities related to quality in the College, along with targets and status updates. The Panel was also informed that the system is evaluated on an ongoing basis, including evaluation by the QAAC. However, the Panel noted during the Site Visit that the QA system and related policies and procedures are not consistently implemented (see Indicator 3.2, Indicator 3.3, Indicator 4.3 and Indicator 4.4). The Panel also noted that Course Portfolios, in particular, need more attention to ensure they are complete. The Panel heard of planned improvements, during the Site Visit, including updating the internal pre- and post-moderation forms, implementation of external

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moderation, comprehensive programme benchmarking and revisions to surveys to ensure that programme level data is collected. During the Extension Visit, the Panel noted that most of these plans have been executed. The Panel recommends that the College should continuously ensure that the existing institutional policies and processes are consistently and rigorously implemented.

## 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.*

**Judgment: *Addressed***

- The CoB organisation chart shows a typical structure found in a college with the Head of the Department of Management and Marketing, where the MBA is situated, reporting to the College Dean. The MBA Programme Coordinator oversees the programme and reports to the Head of Department, while individual Course Coordinators report to the Programme Coordinator. The reporting lines are clear and ensure effective communication and decision-making processes that are supported by a number of departmental and College-level committees. All of the committees have clear terms of reference and there are job descriptions for all of the management roles.

- The Head of Department and the Programme Coordinator both have oversight of the programme. The academic standards and quality are assured through a range of QA processes, mechanisms and instruments that are deployed by the College QA Director and the departmental QA Committee. The Programme Coordinator provides general leadership for the programme, while the Head of Department ensures the availability of resources to ensure its effective delivery. The Panel acknowledges that the programme management arrangements are appropriate, with specific roles and responsibilities clearly outlined in the Quality Manual.

## 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.*

**Judgment: *Partially Addressed***

- The Annual and Periodic Program Review Policy outlines the procedures to be followed for annual and periodic evaluations of the programmes offered at UoB. The policy was recently revised to exempt UoB programmes that have undergone an 'external review',

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such as an external review by the BQA or an accrediting body, such as the AACSB, from having to produce an Annual SER for the year in which such an external review was conducted. As with annual internal reviews, programmes with 'valid programmatic accreditation' are also exempted from having to undertake periodic reviews, which are conducted every five years. This exemption process has been formalised in the updated Annual and Periodic Program Review Policy. The Panel disagrees with this approach because the scope and nature of external programmatic reviews differs from internal annual and periodic reviews.

- In response to the Panel's recommendations that were sent to CoB after the Site Visit, the Panel was provided with an Annual SER for 2021-2022, which includes 17 planned improvement actions. In the interviews that were conducted during the Extension Visit, the Panel was assured that UoB is committed to implementing the annual reviews of the MBA programme in line with the revised Annual and Periodic Programme Review Policy. The Panel was also provided with the 2022-2023 Annual SER, and an action plan for improvements.

- The Panel notes that there are appropriate arrangements in place at the institutional level for the periodic programme reviews, however, these have not been fully implemented in the MBA programme. The Panel also notes that the last major revision of the MBA programme was conducted following a stakeholder conference in 2021, taking into consideration the feedback obtained from the PAC and a market study. During the Extension Visit, the Pannel was informed that the MBA programme will be reviewed in due course and relevant external stakeholders, including practitioners, will be involved. No evidence of comprehensive formal periodic reviews that are consistently implemented was provided. While the Panel is satisfied with the arrangements for the periodic programme reviews at the institutional level, it recommends that the College should ensure that appropriate mechanisms for implementing periodic reviews and related improvement plans are regularly and consistently deployed.

## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- The Programme Specification states that the MBA programme was revised 'following an extensive benchmarking exercise of AACSB-accredited colleges in the UK, US, Australia, etc.'. The benchmarking was explored by the Panel in detail, and it was found that the Programme Study Plan and the AoL Report for the former version of the MBA programme

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contained a mapping of the eight courses on the MBA to courses at nine US universities and three regional (UAE, Kuwait) universities. Benchmarking was limited only to the courses on the programme and did not include the learning outcomes, delivery mode or other aspects. UoB recognises the limitations of its programme benchmarking process and has developed an updated benchmarking template which includes reference points such as the admission criteria and PILOs.

- During the Extension Visit, the Panel was provided with evidence that a recent benchmarking analysis of the MBA programme was conducted, using the updated benchmarking template. The programme was benchmarked with the MBA programmes at West Virginia University (with which UoB has a formal agreement), in addition to one regional University and three international universities. A collated report was produced. Recommendations for changes to the MBA were made based on the outcomes of the benchmarking, but not formally documented in the benchmarking report. Instead, the changes were recorded in the Existing Academic Programme Amendment application form. The Panel considers this progression to be adequate.

- The Alumni Survey, the Faculty Survey and the Graduate Destination Survey that were provided during the Site Visit as evidence of formal mechanisms for collecting feedback from internal and external stakeholders, were not programme-specific and contain data for the CoB as a whole. These surveys are conducted every two years according to the Quality Manual. During the Site Visit, the Panel requested copies of the Exit Survey which is mentioned in the Quality Manual but was informed that it was never administered for postgraduate programmes and would be starting in Spring 2022. The Panel was provided with a draft version of the new Exit Survey and survey reports, which contain a detailed analysis of the quantitative results and comments from alumni and faculty, with recommendations for improvements based on the feedback of these stakeholders. However, since the surveys are not programme-specific, their usefulness in informing decisions on the programme is of limited value.

- In response to the Panel's recommendations that were sent to CoB after the Site Visit, evidence was provided on administering the alumni survey and employer survey in Spring 2023. The results were filtered by programme and distributed to relevant staff members and the PAC in Fall 2023. The results of the 'Programme Feedback Annual Survey' filled in by students were also provided. The Panel is satisfied with the progress made.

- During interviews with faculty, the Panel learned that students and other stakeholders such as the PAC are informed about improvements made through e-mails and formal meetings. The SAC is also used as a more formal means of engaging with students and responding to their feedback and there is evidence of action plans being drawn up to address concerns raised by students in SAC meetings.

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## 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.*

**Judgment:** *Addressed*

- The MBA has a functioning PAC with clear terms of reference, which includes business experts, employers and alumni. The PAC meets regularly and provides feedback about the programme. The feedback is collated and summarised into recommendations which are discussed at the QA Committee meetings. Action plans have been drawn up in response to these recommendations. The Panel acknowledges that the PAC is an active forum used for informing programme decision-making and appreciates the engagement with external stakeholders through the PAC as a means of providing useful industry insights to enhance the MBA programme.

- A market survey was conducted in 2020 to seek feedback from industry about the MBA programme. During the Extension Visit, the Panel was provided with the results of the surveys that were conducted after the Site Visit (see Indicator 3.6). It was also confirmed, during the Extension Visit, that the use of these surveys in the programme is being monitored and there is an awareness of the shortcomings in this area which has resulted in improvements being made to the surveys. Moreover, the Panel was informed that there are also plans to modify the surveys and make them more comprehensive to enable a more regular scoping of the labour market and the national and societal needs, and to ensure that the programme is relevant and up-to-date.

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# V. Conclusion

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

There is "Confidence" in the Master of Business Administration programme of the College of Business Administration offered by the University of Bahrain.

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

1. The use of a variety of teaching and learning methods on the MBA programme to enhance the learning experience.

2. The engagement with external stakeholders through the PAC as a means of providing useful industry insights to enhance the MBA programme.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the UoB and the College of Business Administration should:

1. Ensure that the revised programme intended learning outcomes are appropriately mapped to updated programme educational objectives.

2. Review and update the mapping of course intended learning outcomes to programme intended learning outcomes to ensure that it is complete and accurate.

3. Investigate the reasons for the large number of appeals by MBA students in the 'Research Methods and Statistical Analysis' and the 'Business Ethics' courses and address any underlying issues that are contributing to this anomaly.

4. Regularly benchmark and revise the admission requirements in light of student performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders.

5. Develop an effective mechanism for ensuring appropriate and balanced academic staff workloads are developed and implemented as a priority in order to maintain teaching quality and academic standards on the programme.

6. Enhance faculty capacity for supervising research theses and projects through the implementation of effective relevant professional development programmes.

7. Provide appropriate and effective career support services to MBA students to help them accomplish their professional goals and aspirations.

8. Deploy the existing academic advising procedures more effectively in order to reduce the number of at-risk students on the programme.

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9. Continue implementing external moderation on the MBA courses and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the programme's external moderation to ensure consistent assessments and fairness of grading.

10. Deploy appropriate mechanisms to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the capstone consultancy project and related arrangements, and to make improvements to the process.

11. Investigate the reasons for the inordinately long period of time MBA students take to complete the programme and implement appropriate strategies to mitigate this.

12. Continuously ensure that the existing institutional policies and processes are consistently and rigorously implemented.

13. Ensure that appropriate mechanisms for implementing periodic reviews and related improvement plans are regularly and consistently deployed.

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