



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Summary

**Ahlia University
College of Arts & Science
Master's Degree in Mass Communication & Public
Relations
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 8 – 10 May 2023

HA081-C3-R081

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 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	

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

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

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

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Ahlia University
College/ Department*	College of Arts & Science
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Master's Degree in Mass Communication & Public Relations
Qualification Approval Number	Higher Education Council Approval Letter No.: 81-ATM/ 2 2008
NQF Level	9
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from the date of placement
Number of Units*	14
NQF Credit	144
Programme Aims*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare highly qualified media professionals who have a wide range of knowledge and skills, whether in the fields of information, public culture and arts, or in the fields of media, communication, and public relations. 2. Graduate media cadres who are scientifically, professionally and technically qualified, meet the needs of the Bahraini, Gulf and Arab society, and contribute to keeping pace with scientific and technological development in the field of media, communication and public relations. 3. Develop and enhance the skills of effective communication, critical thinking, and adherence to professional and ethical responsibilities of the programme's graduates, in a way that enhances their chances of joining the media work. 4. Build awareness among students of the political, social, and economic changes affecting communication and media phenomena and practices and develop research skills among students.

Programme
Intended Learning
Outcomes*

A1. Concepts and Theories: Demonstrate a comprehensive, detailed and critical knowledge of mass communication and public relations' theories, by interpreting media and public relations issues, through projecting knowledge, theories, and cognitive trends in both fields on the practices of media institutions in the society.

A2. Contemporary Trends, Problems and Research: Demonstrate a comprehensive detailed knowledge of the latest theories in the field of mass communication and public relations, the latest concepts related to the methods and approaches of scientific research, and the specialized enquiry methods applied in the two fields.

A3. Professional Responsibility: Consider professional responsibility related to the rules of scientific research at a professional level, and the ethics of media production for journalism, radio, and public relations.

B1. Problem Solving: Deal with complex and unexpected problems or issues with sources and institutions during the process of collecting the report's elements, journalistic material, public relations material, or research material for the Master's thesis.

B2. Modeling and Design: Employ the required professional skills in designing and implementing media projects for journalism, public relations, and academic research, in addition to discussing issues and ideas related to the two fields.

B3. Application of Methods and Tools: Use professional skills in applying media and academic writing methods and techniques, and applying modern research approaches, strategies, and techniques to different research projects, along with a variety of professional and academic issues.

C1. Analytical Skills: Critically analyze mass communication and public relations' theories using a combination of approaches related to scientific research.

C2. Synthetic Skills: Demonstrate a professional level in the synthesis of data, information and quotations, according to the media foundations of journalistic and public relations' writing, by using a combination of academic writing approaches; so that the student can

	<p>synthesize and link the data, resources and results of scientific research in a professional and explicit manner.</p> <p>C3. Creative Skills: Demonstrate a professional level of creativity and innovation in writing press and public relations' materials and employ research tools and approaches in addressing media problems and phenomena.</p> <p>D1. Communication Skills: Use professional academic writing skills in the scientific research project; so that the research is effectively communicated to students and researchers.</p> <p>D2. Leadership and Teamwork Skills: Communicate effectively with peers and colleagues within a media team, to produce printed, visual, audio, and electronic media materials.</p> <p>D3. Organizational and Developmental Skills: Work at a professional level within the media work environment that is characterized by variable and complex contexts, including the need to produce press materials or public relations' materials timely and under specific pressure.</p> <p>D4. Ethics and Social Responsibility Skills: Commitment to professional responsibility and governing ethical standards; to produce media and public relations' materials, in addition to scientific rules for conducting academic research and studies.</p>
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* Mandatory fields

III. Judgment Summary

The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	The Learning Programme	Satisfied
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
Standard 2	Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfied
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 3	Academic Standards of Students and Graduates	Satisfied
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Not Applicable

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

IV. 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's Degree in Mass Communication & Public Relations of the College of Arts & Science offered by the Ahlia University.

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

1. There is an effective plan for excellence in teaching and learning that encourages student engagement in the learning process. The plan is concerned with using learning methods that support student participation, such as: 'self-reflection', 'role play', and 'case study'. It also encourages student engagement in the labour market and professional practice, whether through projects, site visits, hosting speakers, or conducting research that serves the industry, in addition to recognizing the development of lifelong learning skills.
2. There is a clear and effective quality assurance system, which is regularly monitored, developed and improved.
3. There is an effective advisory board, at the level of the programme, that contributes to aligning its outcomes to the needs of the labour market.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Ahlia University and the College of Arts & Science should:

1. Ensure that risks are clearly and regularly identified at the programme level; and ensure that an annual report is submitted by the Head of the Department to the Dean of the College, and the Risk Management Committee at the University, as stated in the university's policy in this regard.
2. Reformulate the programme's aims to include an independent objective for scientific research and review the matrix that is mapping the programme's aims to its learning outcomes.
3. Benchmark the learning outcomes in a more precise and detailed way to ensure that the learning outcomes of the programme and its courses are aligned with their international equivalents.
4. Ensure that the 'Contemporary Trends in Mass Communication and Public Relations' course is taken as a part of the nine credits required to be passed before the student registers in the 'Research Approaches in Mass Communication and Public Relations' course.

5. Place the 'Research Approaches in Mass Communication and Public Relations' course as a prerequisite for the 'Analysis of Radio and Television Discourse' course, so that the student is aware of the principles of content analysis before studying the 'Analysis of Radio and Television Discourse' course.
6. Review the list of elective courses and ensure that it includes sufficient courses in mass communication and public relations.
7. Carry out the process of selecting and choosing textbooks *via* a specialized committee in the Department that has clear and written criteria for the selection of textbooks; and ensure that the nominated books are subject to a verification and review process by this committee, to determine the appropriateness and relevance of these books and to ensure that they are issued by authors with a prestigious reputation within the academic community and by reliable publishing houses.
8. Ensure that the course syllabi include a list of scientific research published in Arabic and English, by accredited scientific journals, in addition to an adequate number of foreign references that students can use.
9. Include the study and discussion of the ethics of scientific research in the 'Research Approaches' course; and ensure that the ethics of scientific research is comprehensively introduced as a significant part of this course and not limited to academic integrity.
10. Review the current admission requirements of the programme and the remedial courses for the admission of students who do not meet the admission requirements, in light of the feedback received from stakeholders and the results of the conducted benchmarks at the local and international levels.
11. Consider the scientific supervision of Master's theses as a part of the teaching load of faculty members; and ensure that there is an adequate induction and training to prepare new faculty supervisors.
12. Maintain a record to monitor and document cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism, as well as the actions taken.
13. Develop rigorous regulations to ensure that there is a variety of external examiners for Master's theses; and allocate sufficient time to discuss the theses.
14. Develop a periodic report reflecting the use of data related to the level of students' progression, and the graduates' destination, in verifying the fulfillment of academic standards.
15. Conduct rigorous labour market scoping studies based on reliable indicators, to ensure the relevance and currency of the programme.