



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

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report**

**Ahlia University  
College of Business and Finance  
Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 25 – 27 October 2021**

**HA030-C3-R030**

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## Acronyms

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountant
APR	Academic Programme Review
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee
AU	Ahlia University
AY	Academic Year
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSAF	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance
CAB	College External Advisory Board
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CBF	College of Business and Finance
CFA	Chartered Financial Analyst
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CME	Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EPE	External Programme Evaluator
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
ICTC	Information and Communication Technology Centre
IFRS	International Financial Reporting Standards
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PILO	programme intended learning outcome
QA	Quality Assurance

SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TLAC	Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee

## 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 <b>Standard 1</b> 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 the 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 Business and Finance Department of Accounting, Finance and Banking
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance
Qualification Approval Number	Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. (1626-03) of 2001 Higher Education Council Letter No. (أ ت م/ 2008- 81) of 2008 Higher Education Council Decision No. (93) of Meeting (11/2008) of 2008
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Revalidation Date
Number of Units*	45 Core Courses
NQF Credit	548
Programme Aims*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To equip students with in-depth knowledge and multi-perspectives on sustainable accounting and finance.</li> <li>• To provide student with competence to practically apply professional standards related to accounting and finance</li> <li>• To develop student's innovation and leadership potential through a variety of soft skills such as communication, teamwork and global citizenship.</li> <li>• To develop awareness and appreciation for social and ethical responsibilities at the societal and global levels.</li> <li>• To equip students with creative and innovative skills to adapt lifelong learning and research</li> </ul>
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	<p><b>A1. Concepts and Theories:</b> Demonstrate critical knowledge and understanding of theoretical fundamentals of accounting and finance, their application to contemporary issues to derive alternative solutions.</p> <p><b>A2. Contemporary Trends, Problems and Research:</b> Investigate and interpret contemporary trends, major issues related to accounting and finance through the execution of defined research projects.</p> <p><b>A.3 Professional Responsibility:</b> Demonstrate knowledge and adherence to professional responsibilities and business practices, as a business professional, in the field of accounting and finance including International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).</p> <p><b>B1. Problem solving:</b></p>

	<p>Use specialist-level computational and technological skills to analyze accounting and financial data and generating output used in decision-making</p> <p><b><i>B2. Modelling and Designing:</i></b>  Demonstrate creativity in using accounting and financial models, empirically identify causal factors underlying, as well as to predict financial trends.</p> <p><b><i>B3. Application of Methods and Tools:</i></b>  Apply specialist software-based information systems and statistical tools, to generate accounting and financial sustainable and reliable data used in decision-making</p> <p><b><i>C1. Analytic Skills:</i></b>  Critically analyze and interpret accounting and financial information using specific accounting and finance tools.</p> <p><b><i>C2. Synthetic Skills:</i></b>  Demonstrate insight of accounting and financial principles and theories in conjunction with professional judgment to generate conclusions in a range of relevant contexts.</p> <p><b><i>C3. Creative Skills:</i></b>  Demonstrate creativity in identifying complex contemporary accounting and financial issues as well as the implementation of relevant solutions.</p> <p><b><i>D1. Communication skills:</i></b>  Use specific skills to communicate technical concepts and theories to a variety of audiences by oral, electronic and written means.</p> <p><b><i>D2. Teamwork and Leadership:</i></b>  Operate at specialized level teamwork skills, and lead, multiple and heterogeneous teams within the framework of jointly tackling problems encountered in collaborating efficiently in a variety of professional contexts</p> <p><b><i>D3. Organizational and Developmental skills:</i></b>  Demonstrate organizational skills and life-long skills needed to support personal and professional development aligned with independent learning.</p> <p><b><i>D4. Ethics and social responsibility:</i></b>  Demonstrate and appreciate ethical and social reasoning in the decision-making of corporate and governmental organizations in terms of stakeholder welfare including a comprehensive examination of the importance of sustainable development to the economy and society.</p>
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\* Mandatory fields

### III. Judgment Summary

## The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>The Learning Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Efficiency of the Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	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
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Academic Standards of Students and Graduates</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
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	Addressed
Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Addressed

<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Addressed

## IV. Standards and Indicators

### Standard 1

#### The Learning Programme

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

#### Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

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

##### **Judgment: Addressed**

- The Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance (BSAF) is delivered by the College of Business and Finance (CBF) at Ahlia University (AU) since 2003. The programme was placed on the National Qualification Framework (NQF) during 2016 and revalidated in 2019. The SER provides a detailed description of the planning process for the programme. In particular, the planning process is closely linked to the institutional mission and strategic goals and supported by the Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan, which is operationalized on annual basis at the department level. The Panel was provided with evidence on consultation processes relating to compliance with the plan and is satisfied that the planning process was relevant and fit for purpose.
- The SER describes the risk management process at AU. The risk management at the university level is overseen by the university standing committee, chaired by the Vice President for Administration and Finance, which is responsible for the development of clear risk identification mechanisms at the university and college levels. The operational risk on matters such as resource allocations and students' affairs are assessed and reported at the College Council for attention. Furthermore, minutes of the Covid-19 Steering Committee provided to the Panel demonstrates AU's commitment to dealing with the potential risks posed by the pandemic. Moreover, the Panel was provided with Risk Management Plan Register as evidence of AU's commitment to proactive regular risk assessments. However, the Panel notes that the register is not sufficiently comprehensive and updated. For instance, the last entry in the register is in April 2020, and it is not clear what actions have been taken and lessons learned. The identification and assessment of potential risks were discussed during the site visit interviews with senior management and quality assurance staff and faculty members. The Panel acknowledges the mechanism for identifying, assessing and dealing with potential risks; though, recommends that the College should review and regularly update its Risk Management Plan Register, to ensure

that the potential risks related to the quality of the programme are mitigated appropriately.

- As per the SER, the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) of the BSAF programme are mapped to the corresponding NQF level descriptors. The evidence provided to the Panel and interviews with faculty members confirmed that the mapping and confirmation processes are done meticulously, with relevant trainings and workshops provided. Evidence on internal verification and reviews conducted to ensure strict adherence was also provided. The Panel is of the view that BSAF programme conforms to the NQF's qualification design requirements.
- As per the SER the name of the programme, Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance, is consistent with the programme contents, verified by the NQF and accurately documented on students' transcripts. The Panel examined the Programme Specification Form as well as sample transcripts and certificates and found that the name of the programme as documented was accurate. The AU website also confirms the name of the programme/qualification as documented. The academic transcripts state the NQF level of the qualification in compliance with NQF requirements. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the name of the programme is concise and accurately reflects the programme contents and qualification type.
- The programme has five broad aims which are clearly stated in the Programme Specification Form. The aims have a particular focus on equipping students with in-depth knowledge, practical and professional competence, innovative and leadership skills, social and ethical awareness, as well as creativity. These programme aims are supported by the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) with various mappings of individual courses to them. The SER states that regular review of the programme follows a clear process of consultation with relevant stakeholders, including the College External Advisory Board (CAB), alumni, employers, students as well as External Programme Evaluators (EPE). Furthermore, confirmation was obtained from interviews with various stakeholders during the site visit. Additional evidence provided to the Panel confirmed revisions of the programme aims to incorporate sustainability, leadership, and social and ethical perspectives as well as creativity.
- The SER states that the programme aims contribute to the achievement of the university and college missions. The programme has five broad goals, and these are carefully mapped to the college mission and goals as well as the university mission and goals. To achieve effective mapping, the programme aims, which include emphasis on research, are further mapped to the PILOs. The SER states that the PILOs are regularly assessed and externally validated as a measure of attainment, and that all the PILOs were attained in the Academic Year (AY) 2020-2021. The Panel examined a detailed ILO attainment matrix provided as evidence as well as PILO assessment matrix and was satisfied that the ILOs were indeed attained. Based on the evidence provided, the Panel acknowledges that the programme aims are clear, appropriate, regularly revised in consultation with different

stakeholders and contributes effectively to the achievement of the college and institutional mission and goals.

## **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***

- There are ten generic university wide graduate attributes defined by the AU's Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2026). As noted from the SER, AU has clearly defined graduate attributes, which are embedded within the PILOs. The provided evidence shows detailed mapping of PILOs to the graduate attributes, in addition to the mapping of the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) to the PILOs. The Panel is of the view that the PILOs reflect the defined graduate attributes of the institution.
- The BSAF programme has clearly defined PILOs. The PILOs are mapped to the programme aims and are supported by CILOs. The PILOs permit the attainment of the relevant subject-specific skills, critical thinking skills as well as a wide range of skills. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the PILOs are appropriate and clearly linked to the programme aims.
- The BSAF programme has 13 PILOs, which are well-written, measurable, mapped to the NQF level descriptors and meet the international standards for the qualification. As described in the SER, the PILOs had been benchmarked as part of the periodical review of the programme. The Panel was provided with a detailed PILOs assessment matrix and was satisfied that they were regularly assessed. However, the Panel examining the PILOs noted that they are written in long sentences with more than one verb which would require special attention in their assessment. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should revise its PILOs in the next periodic review, to have simplified sentences with fewer verbs to make it easy for their assessments.
- According to the SER the CILOs are clearly stated in the course syllabus for each course. However, the Panel finds that some CILOs are unclear and difficult to measure. For example, the Panel notes, from the sample course syllabus provided (FINC421), CILOs that are long and unclear (as in CILO B1), and also those that are wordy and use multiple verbs (as in CILO C1 and CILO D3); others that use vague phrases (e.g., 'Operate at specialized level' as in CILO A3 and CILO D2). Additional course syllabi provided to the Panel similarly demonstrate a need for improvement. For example, there is a use of two separate sentences with unrelated verbs (relating to accounting recognition on the one hand and definition of business forms on the other hand) in a single CILO, A1 in ACCT201. The lack of clarity, use of multiple verbs and compound statements as well as long statements can make CILOs difficult to achieve. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the

number of CILOs are too many which can make it more difficult to manage. The Panel notes that AU has formal mechanisms to ensure the appropriateness of the CILOs, which include regular programme reviews, external assessment/evaluation as well as a direct application of the NQF framework. The Panel discussed the CILOs and the existing mechanisms during the site visit interviews and noted that external moderators had expressed concerns about the number of CILOs. The Panel acknowledges the mechanisms in place to ensure the appropriateness of the CILOs; however, recommends that the College should review the CILOs to reduce their number, improve their measurability, and ensure that courses in the third- and fourth-year courses are more focused on critical thinking and subject specific skills.

- As per the SER, the CILOs of each course at the BSAF programme are mapped to the PILOs. Sample course syllabi provided to the Panel shows a clear mapping of CILOs to the PILOs. Also, sample mapping score cards confirmed the mappings and its reflection in the BSAF Programme Specification Form. However, as mentioned previously, some CILOs are unclear and immeasurable due to the use of multiple verbs, compound sentences and their length. This makes it very difficult to assess the efficiency of the curriculum, in addition to the difficulty of the assessment of CILOs. Knowledge and Understanding (Concepts and Theories) (Domain A) is repeated in all of the courses unnecessarily. Specific knowledge and skill could be repeated to provide deep learning, but this should not be practiced in all of the courses. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should carefully review the corresponding mappings of CILOs to the PILOs to ensure effective assessment of achieved learning.

### **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**

- The BSAF programme study plan contains a clearly organised list of courses corresponding to each level of study with a clear list of appropriate prerequisites. The programme has 134 credit hours which can be taken over a period of 4 years or 8 semesters, and this reflects a standard progression through the courses. The Panel notes that the study plan makes no reference to the corresponding NQF level; however, it is clear from the available evidence that the BSAF programme has been validated and placed on the NQF level 8. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the progression of the programme is appropriate.
- The SER describes the revision and benchmarking processes applicable to the BSAF programme. The available evidence suggests that the programme has undergone some revisions through benchmarking, following a formal process at the local, regional and

international levels. The programme has also been benchmarked to a major accountancy professional body (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountant ACCA) which confirms that a careful validation and mapping process is adhered to. According to the SER students receive as many as nine exemptions from ACCA. The regular revision of the programme was confirmed during interviews with stakeholders and faculty members. The Panel notes from the evidence provided that the recent revision to the programme has resulted in a much broader portfolio of major elective courses, including Accounting Information systems (ACCT405), Taxation (ACCT411), Contemporary Issues in Economics and Finance (FINC411) and Monetary and Financial Systems (ECON421). The Panel notes that the revised programme requires students to take two major electives, instead of one under the old (2017-2021) programme, in addition to the Internship course. This represents a significant improvement in response to changing market and societal needs. Overall, the Panel acknowledges that the programme has a well-designed study plan with clearly stated required and elective courses, prerequisites, and reasonable workloads assigned to students in each semester.

- The SER states that the BSAF programme follows a formal mechanism to ensure an appropriate balance between theory and practice, as well as between skills in the curriculum. On this, the Panel notes that BSAF programme has been benchmarked to and validated by the ACCA. Also, the Panel reviewed the BSAF courses list in the study plan and the course directory and was satisfied with the distribution of the courses between theory and practice. The Panel examined sample course syllabi and course files and was satisfied that the course topics and assessments had a balanced distribution between theory and practice as well as between knowledge and skills. For instance, students undertake research methods and practice-oriented projects, as well as practice-based sessions with application of relevant financial software. The Panel confirmed from interviews that this balance was largely informed by regular consultations with relevant stakeholders.
- The Panel examined the BSAF Programme Specification Form and the study plan and noted that the BSAF courses are comparable to courses offered to students pursuing similar qualification in other institutions. The Panel further reviewed a sample of course syllabi and course files and concluded that the course contents have appropriate depth and breath.
- The SER describes the internal verification process that ensures that textbooks are current and appropriate. The SER states that Smart-books are used. The use of smart-books has become a standard approach to enable students to have a more tailored approach to learning. The Panel examined the textbooks mentioned in the provided course syllabi and found them appropriate and there is evidence of use of recent research findings in courses reviewed, which was also confirmed during in interviews with faculty.

## 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**

- As per the SER, the Panel notes that AU's Teaching and Learning Plan (2016-2025), which has been recently revised for the years 2021-2025, is aligned with the institutional Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2026). The Teaching and Learning Plan (2016-2025) emphasizes the use of a range of teaching and learning tools such as innovative teaching, blended learning, and virtual learning. The Panel was provided with evidence indicating that there is effective use of the teaching tools in general and, particularly, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The SER states that AU's teaching and learning methods are in line with the teaching and learning philosophy derived from the institutional teaching and learning goals. The teaching goals emphasize commitment to innovative teaching aimed at preparing students for success, among others. The BSAF Programme Specification Form lists a variety of teaching methods, including problem solving, independent learning, hands-on case evaluation and analysis, research-based and development projects, as well as presentation. The sample of course syllabi provided to the Panel includes consistent teaching and learning methods (such as problem solving, practical application of knowledge, and research informed learning) in line with the institutional teaching philosophy. The Panel is satisfied that the teaching and learning methods are appropriate and consistent with the institutional teaching and learning philosophy.
- The SER lists e-learning (blended and virtual learning) as part of the teaching methods informed by the teaching and learning philosophy to enable AU students to attain the course and programme ILOs. Furthermore, the institutional Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2026) pays particular attention to enhancing e-learning as part of the strategic goals. E-learning is implemented mainly *via* Moodle learning platform. Sample evidence on the implementation of virtual learning during the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent students' feedback were provided to the Panel.
- The SER mentions several events organised in conjunction with professional bodies such as the ACCA and Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) to enhance students' professional skills and lifelong learning. Other events mentioned include virtual stock exchange trading competition, as well as research related activities. The institutional Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan Initiative 4 clearly promotes students' participation in organised community and societal events. Furthermore, in enhancing the development of generic and life-long learning skills, the Plan requires specific teaching strategies involving self-reflection, case studies and role playing. In addition, to enhance those skills, the Panel noted some activities such as: Internships as a BSAF Programme requirement, field trips organised to visit various companies where they learn the nature of their operations,

INJAZ Bahrain Company Competitions where they develop a business plan with the academic and industry supervisors, Trade Quest Competition where students trade at virtual stock exchange guided by industry mentors, etc. All are activities organised appropriately by the CBF. Interviews with students during the site visit confirmed their participation in professional and practical events. The Panel acknowledges that the teaching and learning methods of AU provide the opportunity for BSAF students to be exposed to professional practice/application of theory and develop their independent and lifelong competencies. The Panel appreciates the opportunities the BSAF Programme provides to its students, which include participating in a variety of competitions, where they develop their practical application of theories, independent and lifelong learning competencies.

- The SER states that the BSAF programme is designed to offer a balanced exposure to knowledge and practical application, including the enhancement of students' innovative and research capabilities. To this end, a compulsory project course (ACCT499 or FINC499) is offered to students to help them develop their research skills. These final project courses are also supported by smaller projects which focus on the development of individual research skills, with activities including literature review and practical analysis. The project course was discussed satisfactorily with faculty members, students and alumni during the virtual interviews. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the learning environment is appropriate and motivates the development of right student perception as well as research and innovative skills.
- The Panel notes that the AU's Teaching and Learning Plan (2016-2025) promotes the use of different learning activities, both formal and informal. Practical learning courses such as student projects as well as field trips, professional and societal activities are encouraged to promote lifelong learning. Lifelong learning was discussed with internship supervisors and employers during the site visit interviews. The Panel acknowledges that the environment provides appropriate support for lifelong learning.

### **Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements**

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- AU has an assessment framework consisting of policies and procedures within the institution's Assessment Manual. The Panel examined the Assessment Manual and noted that it covers a wide range of assessment tools, including quizzes, assignments, examinations, projects, among others. The document also covers policies on the measurement of ILOs attainments, assessment weightings, level of difficulty in line with the NQF descriptors, transparency, as well as conformity with the Higher Education Council (HEC) guidelines. The Panel discussed the assessment policies and procedures

during the site visit interviews and further examined several course files provided. Based on the available evidence, the Panel is satisfied that the policies and procedures in place provide an appropriate assessment framework for the BSAF programme.

- As per the SER, the Assessment Manual is widely disseminated to students and academic staff *via* Ahlia SharePoint, AU's website and student's handbook. Updates are further provided to staff *via* workshops. The Panel confirmed from interviews with students and staff that the dissemination of the policies and procedures is adequate.
- The Panel notes that the assessment framework encourages both summative and formative assessments. The Panel examined the Assessment Manual and noted a clear emphasis on providing constructive feedback through the different types of assessments. The feedback policy and procedures recommend a turnaround period of between 3-14 days depending on the weighting of the assessments; these include minor assessments (with less than 20 percent weighting), and major assessments (with 20 percent weighting or more). Interviews with faculty members confirmed this variable feedback turnaround period but within the limits enshrined in the Assessment Manual. The Panel examined a sample of marked assessments and noted that the mark per question as well as the mapping of questions to ILOs were provided on the front page of the assessment forms. The Panel also noted that detailed written feedback was provided for students.
- The BSAF programme has a course on ethics offered to students in the third year of their studies named 'Ethics and Professional Practice in Business' (ETHC 391). Furthermore, all projects including the final year projects are subjected to a similarity test of Turnitin, which is properly and strictly implemented. The Panel discussed ethical issues with senior management and faculty members. Based on the evidence provided, the Panel is satisfied that the assessment at AU appropriately considers ethical issues and principles of scientific research.
- The SER clearly describes the verification and moderation mechanisms used to ensure that assessments are rigorous and fair and that grading of achievements are appropriately moderated. Course syllabi go through internal verification whilst assessments are subjected to rigorous internal and external moderations. There is evidence of effective implementation of the related policies and procedures. For instance, a sample external assessor's feedback notes a fair and appropriate grading with room for improvement in rigour for the achievement of the ILOs. A sample minutes of a Department Council meeting (dated 11 February 2021) shows a swift move to address the external moderators' concerns. Interviews with external moderators and faculty members confirmed the effective review of assessments and grading of students' achievements.
- AU Assessment Manual includes a policy on academic misconduct that classifies six types of misconduct, which are plagiarism, data falsification, cheating, free-riding collusion, recycling collusion and active personation. The Manual also contains a section where the policies and procedures for appeal are explained in detail and clearly. There is also a Discipline Committee that assess misconducts and prescribe appropriate penalties in line

with the Policy. Academic misconducts and plagiarism issues were discussed with senior management and faculty members, and the Panel was provided with a sample academic misconduct warning letter issued in 2016. There were no recorded misconduct appeals due to very low incidence rate.

## Standard 2

### Efficiency of the Programme

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

#### Indicator 2.1: Admitted Students

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- According to the SER, AU's Admission Policy offers a clear and transparent information regarding the BSAF programme and its specific entry requirements which are provided in several documents such as the Admission Brochure and the Student Handbook. Such information which is approved by the Department Council, College Council and University Council is also publicly available and easily accessible on the website of the University. Admission to the BSAF programme is based on the programme-specific academic criteria and equally applies to male and female students. Admission statistics given in the SER appendix shows that the registered number of male and female students is 170 and 130 respectively. This, together with the implementation of the admission criteria, was confirmed during the interview session with the admission staff.
- Admission to the BSAF programme requires a General Secondary Certificate score of 60% and above for direct entry while students with a score between 50-60% could be admitted after a successful interview. The Panel notes that the mean Tawjehia score on to the BSAF programme is 81.6% with a standard deviation of 13.4, suggesting that the students admitted into the programme do generally have appropriate acceptable score. The Panel noted that the Department Council and University Council took a decision that the required level of English language proficiency would be IELTS 5.0; however, this is noted as IELTS 5.5 in the Student Handbook and from the interviews with administrative staff and the students. The Panel considers this as a material mistake and suggests that it is corrected at the earliest convenience. According to the SER, the entry requirements of the BSAF programme are benchmarked with local and international institutions and appropriately reviewed and revised with approval by the Departmental, College and University Councils.
- The Panel notes that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to support inadequately prepared students on the BSAF programme. The SER states that students admitted to the

BSAF programme with a weakness in English and Mathematics are offered courses in these subjects in a foundation programme. The Panel discussed during the interview sessions with AU staff the performance of students who were admitted to the BSAF programme *via* the foundation programme and of those who directly starting the programme. The Panel was informed that students who had gone through the foundation programme did not have any difficulty in following the study plan of the BSAF programme.

- According to the SER, AU policies and procedures related to access, credit transfer and progression are in line with the HEC rules and regulations. The recognition of prior learning is limited to credit transfer between AU's programmes and from other recognized HEIs. Students transferring from other HEIs are given exemptions to the courses they took in the these institutions, provided that the contents are equivalent to the courses to be exempted.
- As stated in the SER, AU has recently revised the programme-specific admission criteria for the BSAF programme following feedback from relevant internal and external stakeholders and benchmarking with national and international universities. The Panel notes that the BSAF admission criteria and AU's admission policy were revised and subsequently approved by the University Council in July 2018 and July 2021 respectively. During the interview with administrative staff, the Panel was able to confirm that the admission policy is appropriately and regularly revised based on the performance of the students and the feedback received 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: Addressed**

- According to the SER, AU has a Human Resources Policy and Procedures Handbook which provides guidance on the recruitment and employment-related matters. The appointment of academic staff conforms with the Academic Staff Bylaws which lays down the details of the academic staff appointment, promotion and evaluation, amongst others. In addition, promotion policy and procedures are given in the Academic Promotion Bylaws. The Panel examined these documents and discussed them satisfactorily during the interview session with the programme administrators and the academic staff. Furthermore, the Panel examined evidence relating to the appointment, induction, evaluation, and promotion. Moreover, with regard to the appraisal of the academic staff, the Panel was offered completed faculty appraisal forms and had the chance to evaluate them. The appraisal form included assessments by the Chairperson of the Department,

Dean, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Director of the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

- As stated in the SER, AU has a Research Plan (2021-2025) which details the policies and procedures for encouraging academic staff to conduct quality scientific research. The incentives include funding, promotion, and monetary awards for high quality research, among others. The Panel observes that faculty members' performance in research is reflected in their publications in conferences and highly ranked journals. The policies and procedures were confirmed by the Panel at the interview sessions with the programme administrators and academic staff. The Panel is of the view that the applied research policies and procedures are appropriate and aligned with the college and institutional research plan.
- The SER states that AU has a Teaching Load policy approved by the University Council in line with the HEC requirements. According to this policy, professors teach 9 credit hours (3 courses), associate professors 12 credits (4 courses), and assistant professors and lecturers 15 credit hours (5 courses). Additional workload includes thesis supervision with a range of three to five theses per faculty. The Panel was provided with additional evidence confirming the faculty workload. The SER further indicates that the needs of all staff (including women) are considered, and this is assured by AU policies and procedures which are consistent with the Bahraini Law and regulatory requirements.
- According to the SER, currently, there are 40 faculty members serving directly at the College, consisting of six Professors, five Associate Professors, 15 Assistant Professors, 11 Lecturers and three Research Fellows. The BSAF programme on the other hand has 300 registered students as of AY 2020-2021. The Panel was provided with brief CVs of the academic staff and further information about their qualifications and the courses taught by them. The Panel discussed the adequacy of the academic staff members for the BSAF programme during the interview sessions and is satisfied that there are appropriate number of suitably qualified academic staff.
- AU has a Professional Development Plan to identify the staff professional development needs. The identification of professional development needs and implementation of appropriate measures are facilitated by a dedicated Professional Development Committee. Evidence of regular workshops and their evaluation were provided to the Panel. The Panel also examined evidence of sponsoring academic staff to pursue postgraduate studies. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place to support the professional development of the academic staff, in particular, the sponsorship of their postgraduate studies. In addition, as part of the collaboration agreement between the College with Brunel University, academic staff of the College are trained by Brunel University to become qualified supervisors to supervise PhD researchers. The Panel was provided with a list of academic staff who have successfully undergone such training and become recognised PhD supervisors. The Panel appreciates the arrangement with Brunel University to develop the faculty's capacity for PhD research supervision.

- The Panel examined the BSAF academic staff retention rate over the period 2018-2020 and found it to be consistently high. In the last two years, the retention rate of the CBF has been high, marking 92% in 2019 and 95% in 2020. As a policy to keep the retention rate high, AU not only uses salary increments but also provides research grants for publications in conference proceedings and research journals. AU also uses the acknowledgement and recognition of achievements of faculty members to promote faculty retention. The Panel is of the view that there are appropriate arrangements in place to promote the academic staff retention.

### **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**

- The SER notes that AU has 24 classrooms equipped with computers and projectors in addition to lecture halls with 20-35 seating capacity. AU has, also, a large theater, with a capacity of 84 students, used for large events as well as seminar rooms normally used for research defense with a capacity of 39 seats. In addition, AU maintains 12 computer laboratories equipped with the latest hardware and software. The BSAF students also have access to a specialised Research Computer laboratory with various software including Bloomberg terminals and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. The Panel was provided with a virtual video tour of the facilities as evidence. The Panel is satisfied that the classroom and laboratory facilities are adequate and appropriate.
- The Internet facility is available to students for 24 hours throughout the University *via* Wi-Fi and LAN services. In addition, AU's Information and Communication Technology Centre (ICTC) maintains a server that provides and manages the campus-wide network services and user access controls. During the interview sessions, academic staff and students indicated their satisfaction with the Information Technology (IT) facilities and services provided to them.
- As stated in the SER, AU has a well-equipped library, which provides physical and virtual access to more than 2,500,000 e-journal reference materials through 46 databases and more than 12,000 electronic books. Wi-Fi is available within the library and there are several workstations connected to the network which are used by the students to study and utilize the library resources. In addition, the library provides several informal study areas for group study/work. AU also has a Digital Library that provides 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week service to the students.

- According to the SER, AU has formal mechanisms to ensure the maintenance of its resources and assess their adequacy. The responsibility for monitoring and maintaining the resources is assigned to ICTC, which requires regular upgrades and replacements of resources for their currency and relevance. Interviews with the administrative and academic staff showed that they were satisfied with the services provided by the ICTC.
- The SER states that AU has contracted the campus security services to a private professional company, which provides security guards at all entrance points and patrols the campus throughout operating hours. Fire extinguishers are located at various points on the campus, and fire evacuation drills are conducted regularly. AU maintains a well-equipped health clinic run by a full-time nurse. The Panel confirmed during interviews that the administrative and academic staff as well as students are all satisfied with the health and safety services provided by the University.

## **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**

- AU has a centralised Management Information System (MIS) called ADREG that helps the University, colleges and departments in decision making. ADREG generates various reports on students, statistics on the grades and performance of students as well as retention and graduation rates, among others, which are used for decision-making. Minutes of the University Council was provided to the Panel as evidence of the use of the system to identify and monitor the progress of at-risk students. The ICTC presented a demonstration of the MIS to the Panel, and it was very satisfactory.
- According to the SER, ADREG generates utilization reports of all the available classrooms and laboratories, and this is used in planning the resources and activities of the BSAF programme. This enables the programme administrators to monitor the utilization of the laboratories, classrooms and e-learning and make informed decisions. The learning management system (Moodle) is synchronized with ADREG and it enables the management of courses and course enrolments and provides a wide range of reporting.
- The SER describes the procedures AU has in place for the approval and authentication of certification. The authority for the issuing of certificates involves a number of approvals and verification steps, starting with the Graduation Officer to the President of the University. The Panel examined a sample of the issued certificates and noted that each of them is signed by the Dean of Student Affairs, Dean of the College and President of the University. In ensuring the security of data stored on its servers, AU has a set policy and procedures in taking backups of the servers. AU's policies and procedures also ensure that

certificates are genuine and protected against fraud. In addition, ADREG generates a 29-digit security key for each certificate which protects it from fraud. As stated in the SER, the ADREG system also has a graduation module which tracks all the graduation stages.

- The Panel examined sample certificates and transcripts and noted that the qualification title and the achieved learning (including degree class and courses) are clearly stated. Both the certificates and the transcripts are appropriately designed and contain all the required information and approvals. During the interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the certificates and the transcripts are issued without any delay. All student certificates are printed from one source and are passed through several approval processes to ensure that graduates have fulfilled all the graduation requirements.

### **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: Addressed**

- The SER indicates that appropriate support is provided to the students in a range of areas through the Deanship of Student Affairs, Student Counselling Directorate, Directorate of Admission and Registration, and Directorate of Professional Relations. Each Deanship provides support and assistance to students in their respective areas, such as academic advising and workshops, counselling and special needs of students, internship and career guidance and library services and induction, among others. The Panel notes with appreciation that several workshops have been conducted to support students in handling stress and maintaining a balanced mental health and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Panel had the opportunity to discuss the support services provided to students during the interview sessions and is of the view that the support services in place are appropriate.
- The responsibility of providing students support for internship placements and career guidance rests with the Directorate of Professional Relations. Career guidance takes place in the form of organizing biannual Career Days Events. In addition, information on career related opportunities is also published in the Student Handbook and on the website of the University. The Panel confirmed from the interview sessions the satisfaction of students and alumni with the career guidance services provided under the BSAF programme.
- The SER indicates that the Deanship of Student Affairs holds an orientation day every semester for newly admitted students which is recorded on the Academic Calendar. The Orientation covers a brief introduction of the staff working at the Deanship of Student Affairs, student support services, university procedures and academic rules and regulations. The SER does not provide any information on the orientation/induction of

students transferring from other institutions; however, during the interview sessions, the administrative staff confirmed that a common induction is organised for all transferred students.

- According to the SER, AU has a policy and procedures on academic advising detailed in the Academic Advising Policy document. According to the policy, every student enrolled at AU is allocated an academic advisor for the duration of his or her programme of study. The policy requires that each student meets their academic advisor at least once every academic semester to review and discuss their academic progress.
- The Panel notes that AU has provisions in place that ensure equal opportunities for all its students and integrate women's needs in terms of facilities and participation in different extracurricular activities and competitions like INJAZ Bahrain and Trade Quest. According to the SER, AU also has a dedicated policy on admitting and supporting students with special needs in any programme offered. There is a Special Needs Committee which is a standing committee to support students with special needs during their studies at the University. In addition, the Directorate of Student Counselling ensures that arrangements are in place for the special needs students and coordinates with faculty members for any adjustments needed to accommodate their needs.
- The SER states that AU has a policy for identifying and supporting at risk students and also another policy for academic probation through which AU identifies students at risk of academic failure and provides them with the suitable academic support. Students who have successfully completed between 16 and 95 credit hours and have a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0 or higher but below 2.3 are considered at risk. For such students, their academic advisor follows them more closely and additional teaching and learning sessions are arranged. The monitoring and support for at-risk students were confirmed during the site visit interview.
- The Panel notes that AU uses surveys to collect information on students' satisfaction with the support services. Interview sessions with administrative staff confirmed that the support services are also assessed through the feedback and information obtained from ADREG reports, Student Council reports, and the students and administrative staff represented on the College and Department Councils and various committees. The collected feedback and information help AU in identifying the areas that require improvements. The SER, for example, mentions changes made to office hours of the academic staff, which are currently conducted virtually *via* Moodle, as an improvement that has emanated from student surveys.

## Standard 3

### Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

#### Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

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

##### **Judgment: Addressed**

- Assessment methods used for the BSAF programme are documented in the AU Assessment Manual. According to the Assessment Manual, course assessments comprise both formative methods (e.g., quizzes, tests and assignments) and summative methods (e.g., final examinations). The course work component of each course assessment typically contributes 40% to the final mark, while the final examination contributes 60%. The undergraduate final year project (ACCT499/FINC499) is assessed by a written project (worth 70% of the final mark) and an oral presentation (worth 30% of the final mark). The undergraduate internship (INTR465) on the other hand is assessed by an assigned site supervisor (worth 50%), academic supervisor (worth 10%), student bi-monthly reports (worth 20%), and a final report (worth 20%). The academic staff, students and alumni interviewed confirmed that assessment schedules for courses are made available to students at the beginning of each semester. The Department ensures the validity of assessment through mechanisms of internal verification and moderation, as well as external verification and moderation.
- The BSAF Programme Specification Form indicates various assessment methods that are associated with each of the specified PILOs. These include open-book and closed-book examinations (quizzes, class tests, final examinations), practical training exercises, external site visit reports, case analysis, problem-sets, research and non-research-based projects. The academic staff interviewed explained how they ensure that assessments are aligned to the PILOs, CILOs and graduate attributes by using a standard template. The Panel found evidence of how the review of the alignment of assessment to CILOs and PILOs had resulted in an improvement in the assessment methods for (ACCT312). For the indirect assessment of the PILOs, the survey given to the students is simply a satisfaction survey and it is not an exit survey covering all of the PILOs and asking students to what extent they have achieved the PILOs at the time of graduation. Thus, although the Panel acknowledges that there are formal mechanisms in place to ensure alignment of assessments to learning outcomes and graduate attributes, the Panel recommends that the

College should develop its capacity to assess the CILOs and map the assessment to them appropriately.

- The SER states that an ILO Achievement Matrix template is utilised for measuring the level of achievement of CILOs. There is a requirement for a minimum attainment rate of 60% for each CILO and PILO. The Panel was provided with evidence illustrating how the ILO Achievement Matrix has been applied to measure achievement of CILOs, PILOs and graduate attributes. The Panel appreciates the mechanisms the Department has in place to ensure that graduates' achievements meet the PILOs.
- The SER states that the assessment process is monitored through Department Council meetings that are held every semester to discuss the internal and external verification reports and external moderation reports. The assessment process is also regularly reviewed and monitored by CAQA and the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee (TLAC). The Panel found evidence of a TLAC meeting that considered and approved some amendments to the AU Assessment Manual. The Panel acknowledges that appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor the implementation of the assessment process.

### **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**

- Policies and procedures relating to academic integrity are included in the AU Assessment Manual and are further detailed in the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project. The university's policy on academic misconduct identifies six types of academic misconducts such as: plagiarism; data falsification; use of third party or cheat ware sites; free riding collusion; recycling collusion; and active personation. The academic staff interviewed stated that steps are taken during the orientation programme to make students aware of the policy on academic misconduct and the consequences of infringement. The Panel also found brief plagiarism statements in the sample course files provided.
- All assignments and written projects are submitted electronically *via* Turnitin to check for similarity and plagiarism. The maximum percentage of similarity that is considered acceptable for undergraduate courses is 30%. The policies and procedures require that identified similarity cases are carefully checked even when the overall similarity score falls below the cut-off point. For other forms of assessment such as in-class tests and examination, the use of multiple versions and randomization of questions, among other measures, are mentioned in the procedures. Interviews with the academic staff confirmed that the documented process is consistently implemented.

- The SER states that appropriate actions are taken against plagiarism and other academic misconducts in line with the University's Assessment Manual. Sample Turnitin screenshot provided to the Panel had scores below the acceptable score of 30%, which are further checked by faculty members to ensure that there is no plagiarism. Academic misconduct and plagiarism issues were discussed satisfactorily at the site visit interviews. The Panel was also provided with a sample of academic misconduct warning letter issued in 2016 (in Arabic) as evidence. The Panel learned during interviews, that this was due to the adequate dissemination of relevant policies and procedures, which led to spreading the awareness between students about the academic integrity, in addition to effective dealing with any suspicious cases of exceeding similarity percentage at early stages.

### **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: Addressed**

- The policy and procedures for internal and external moderation are documented in the AU's Assessment Manual. Internal moderation is conducted by an internal committee which typically consists of the Chairperson and two members of the Department. According to the policy on internal moderation, all courses have their major piece of course work, final examinations and overall grade distribution internally moderated. The academic staff interviewed explained that the internal moderation process entails selection of samples from the 'high', 'average', and 'low' scores to verify that the assessment criteria have been applied correctly, and the marking is fair. The Panel is of the view that the internal moderation procedures are appropriate.
- There are policies and procedure in the AU's Assessment Manual which provide guidance for conducting internal moderations. The Panel found examples in the evidence provided that show how the internal moderation process contributes to improvement in courses by examining a sample of graded examinations and completed internal moderation forms with accompanying moderation summary reports. The moderation reports are given due consideration at the meetings of the Department and College Councils. Internal moderations issues and resulting improvement in courses were satisfactorily discussed in the virtual interviews and the Panel was able to confirm that there are appropriate internal moderation mechanisms in place for the BSAF programme.
- As per the SER, AU has formal mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the internal moderation of the programme. The internal moderation reports are submitted to the TLAC for review. These reports, together with the graded samples of scripts, are also forwarded to the external moderators for feedback. The implementation of these mechanisms was confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews with external moderators and faculty.

- According to AU's Assessment Manual, there are formal procedures for external moderation of assessment and selection of external moderators. The external moderation process has a wide scope, covering 20% of the total courses with a clear requirement for the coverage of every offered course within a two-year cycle. The moderation is conducted at the department level, with the Department Chairperson or the Programme Review Coordinator (PRC) having the responsibility for the process. The external moderators submit completed moderation forms to the Department Chair or PRC for discussion at the Department Council. According to the SER, external moderation entails verification of the assessment methods used, alignment with CILOs, fairness of the weighting, accuracy of the grading, and fairness of allocated grades by the external moderators. The Assessment Manual contains the criteria for the appointment of external moderators. External moderators are required to have a PhD or master's degree with extensive academic experience. The Assessment Manual also contains some exclusion criteria such as 'reciprocal arrangements involving similar programmes at another university'. The Panel learned during the interview sessions that all recommendations for the appointment of external moderators are submitted to the College Council for approval.
- The University has a standard template for external moderator reporting. The SER states that the external moderators' comments and recommendations are reviewed by the Department Council and College Council and appropriate actions are taken for improvements. The Panel was provided with a sample of external moderator reports, which includes constructive feedback with recommendations for improvement to the mapping of assessment to the CILOs.
- According to the SER, a status update on external moderators is regularly presented at the TLAC meeting for record keeping. The sample minutes of the TLAC provided to the Panel indicates that the implementation of the action points arising from the external moderation is carefully monitored. Interview with the faculty members who are responsible for curriculum development confirmed that the external moderation process is also monitored by CAQA. Based on the scrutiny of all the provided evidence with regard to the internal and external moderation, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate procedures for selecting internal and external moderators and suitable mechanisms to improve the programme based on their inputs, which are monitored and evaluated properly.

### **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: Addressed**

- The policy and procedures for the management of work-based learning are detailed in the Internship Programme Guidelines. All BSAF students are required to participate in the Accounting and Finance internship for 240 notional hours. Students can only register for the internship course (INTR465) after successfully completing at least 90 credits, with a minimum university CGPA of 2.0. According to the SER, the work-based learning is managed by the Internship Office which places students in relevant organizations to ensure that students gain similar real-world work experiences.
- The Internship Programme Guidelines specifies the roles and responsibilities of the different parties of the undergraduate internship courses. The internship provider, site supervisor, academic supervisor, and the student all have clearly defined roles. The Panel reviewed samples of completed academic supervisor and site supervisor evaluation forms, student bi-monthly reports, and student final reports and confirmed the effectiveness of the BSAF internship course. During interviews with faculty, students, and on-site supervisors, the Panel noted that they are aware of their responsibilities as stated in the Guidelines.
- A key aim of the internship course is to enable students to gain practical experience by integrating knowledge gained from the classroom with competencies in a professional setting. The contribution of the internship course to the overall achievement of the programme aims is demonstrated through the mapping of the course ILOs to the programme ILOs. Both the alumni and external stakeholders interviewed expressed satisfaction with the internship course and how it contributes to the programme aims and the achievement of the PILOs.
- The Panel noted from the SER and from interviews with the academic staff that the internship course is assessed by the site supervisor (50%), the academic supervisor (10%), student bi-monthly reports (20%), and a final report (20%). The Panel learned during the interviews with the site supervisors that they receive appropriate guidance and direction from the academic supervisors. Given the relatively high percentage of the weighting allotted to the site supervisor, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a formal mechanism for ensuring that their assessment is standardised.
- Mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the internship course include surveys to collect feedback from site supervisors. The Panel confirmed that the site supervisor satisfaction score for the BSAF internship course for the second semester of 2020-2021 was 83.7%; though, the Panel noted that the survey given to the site supervisors is simply asking their opinions on each and every PILOs rather than specific issues related to the internship as to how to improve and make it more effective. The Panel noted that site supervisors' evaluations and feedback are discussed in the Department Council for improvement of work-based learning; yet, such discussion was very superficial, and nothing was discussed specifically for the improvement of the internship. Feedback from students is collected through the bi-monthly and final evaluation report; however, no evidence was provided to show how their feedback is used to improve the course delivery. The Panel acknowledges that there are arrangements and mechanisms in place for the

evaluation of the work-based learning; however, the Panel recommends that the College should review and improve the content of the site supervisors survey to include elements other than evaluating the PILOs, and to ensure the proper utilization of the site supervisors' and the students' feedback in improving the effectiveness of the internship course.

### **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: *Partially Addressed***

- The BSAF programme has a final research project component which is undertaken upon successful completion of the Ethics and Research Methods course. The guidelines for the research project are detailed in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Project document. The current implementation of the guidelines for the Project allows students to do their capstone project either individually or as a member in a group project. During interviews with academic staff and students, the Panel confirmed that a few students are allowed to take the project on an individual basis. In the Panel's view, this practice makes it difficult or almost impractical to demonstrate teamwork skills in a project conducted in a non-team setting. The Panel noted that external moderators consider the number of CILOs of the Capstone project to be excessive; yet, they added that the assessment mechanisms are in place. The Panel acknowledges that the Capstone project contributes to the achievements of the PILOs; though, concurs with the recommendation under indicator 1.2 to revise the CILOs of the courses, including the Capstone project, reduce their numbers with appropriate contents, align them with PILOs, in order to assess their achievements appropriately. The Panel also recommends that the College should develop a clear policy on how a student is allowed to take a capstone project, either individually or within a group, for a fair and effective assessment of the performance of the students.
- The roles and responsibilities of the supervisors and students are detailed in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Project document. The Panel found that it has been made available on the University website. According to the guidelines, students are assigned to supervisors by the Department Chairperson based on the specialization of their proposed topic. The Panel confirmed that the roles and responsibilities of both students and their assigned supervisors as clearly stated in the Guidelines document and well-communicated to all stakeholders.
- As detailed in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Project document, students first develop and submit a project proposal for approval, and thereafter they attend practical sessions with a designated supervisor who oversees their progress. The Panel noted from the

Guidelines that the Department places significant emphasis on the monitoring of student progress with the research project. According to the SER, the ADREG system is the main tool that is used to regularly monitor the operation and examination of the research project. The evidence provided to the Panel does not raise any concerns with regards to the resources available to students. The Panel learned during interviews with the academic staff who are involved in the supervision of research projects that the Chairperson of the Department is responsible for tracking supervision records of individual supervisors on the ADREG system to ensure that supervisors are meeting their obligations. However, the Panel couldn't identify any survey on the evaluation of the supervision and the supervisor by the students and there is no mention of it in the SER. The Panel acknowledges that there are appropriate procedures in place for monitoring students' progress, while at the same time recommends that the College should develop a student evaluation survey for the Capstone Project in order to assess its effectiveness.

- Assessment of the undergraduate research project comprises 70% for the written report and 30% for the oral presentation. There is a marking rubric for both the written report and the oral examination, with clear criteria for the grading of the research project as either 'Exceeds standards', 'Meets standards', 'Partially meets standards', or 'Fails to meet standards'. The Panel learned during the interview with the research supervisors that the assessment of the research project is undertaken by an examination committee (comprising the supervisor and two internal examiners) that is appointed by the Chairperson of the Department. The Panel finds the arrangements for grading of a student who has contributed to the completion of a group project to be not clearly stated in the guidelines. Furthermore, the Panel found no reference to the involvement of external examiners in the assessment process neither in the project guidelines nor the SER. However, interviews with faculty members confirmed that samples of graded project are sent to external moderators for evaluation. The Panel, thus, recommends that the College should develop clear assessment criteria for the group projects to ensure effective assessment of each CILOs on an individual basis of each member of a group.
- As per the SER, the Undergraduate Project Guidelines are periodically reviewed by the TLAC to incorporate input from the various Colleges and CAQA. The Panel was able to confirm this from the sample minutes of the Department Council, dated 15 October 2020, which mentioned a revision of the project course to allow students to work in small groups. The Panel acknowledges that the mechanism in place to monitor and implement improvements to the student project is appropriate.

### **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: Addressed**

- According to the SER, graduates of the BSAF programme are classified into categories depending on their CGPA score. During AY 2019-2020, 20% of the graduates were classified in the 'distinction' category with a CGPA of 3.5 or higher, while the remaining 80% were in the 'Good' category with a CGPA from 2 to 3.4. The Panel examined a number of supporting documents including students' graded assessments and capstone projects as well as internal and external moderation reports and found that the level of student achievement is appropriate and reflects their ability to create and innovate. During interviews with the senior academic management and faculty, they confirmed that the level of student achievement in the BSAF programme is demonstrated by the number of publications in reputable international journals, and also by the number of BSAF graduates who have been accepted into postgraduate programmes in local and other international universities. The Panel learned also from interviews that the significant number of BSAF research projects have been published in reputable international journals and was able to confirm this from the provided evidence; therefore, the Panel appreciates that the research projects of the BSAF students are published in reputable international journals.
- The Statistics and Information Data provided in the appendix of the SER shows that the number of admitted students to the first year of the BSAF programme has been declining steadily from 79 in 2017-2018 to 41 in 2020-2021. Similarly, the number of graduates has been declining from 114 in 2016-2017 to 62 in 2019-2020. The overall graduation rate, defined as the number of graduates divided by the number of students registered in the programme, has thus declined from 27.9% in 2016-2017 to 19.9% in 2019-2020. Data on the duration of study for the BSAF over the last four years shows a normal distribution with students typically taking between 2.5 to 6 years or more to complete the BSAF programme, with an average of 4.3 years and a standard deviation of 1.01. The Panel therefore notes that students are generally taking more than the minimum duration of three years to complete the programme. Considering that many of the students are in full-time employment while they are studying, the Panel is of the view that the graduation rate is satisfactory.
- The data on the first destination of graduates shows that 63% and 76% of the graduates proceeded to appropriate employment in the area of accounting or finance in 2019-2020 as compared to 77% and 76% for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 respectively. The employers interviewed also indicated that they are very satisfied with the quality of graduates from the BSAF programme. Evidence provided and interviews confirmed that data collected from different surveys is discussed in the College Council meetings, and suggestions and recommendations are made accordingly. Graduate destination data, which is also used as a tracking mechanism of the graduates, contributes to the improvement of the programme and provides AU with insight on the employability and career options open to graduates.
- AU has a formal system for obtaining feedback from external stakeholders on its graduates through surveys conducted by the Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME). The latest CAB and employer satisfaction survey reports show overall satisfaction

rates of 90.57% and 82.4% respectively. AU also conducts surveys to solicit feedback from students and alumni on their satisfaction with the BSAF programme. The latest student's satisfaction survey report shows an overall satisfaction rate of 83.88%. This high level of satisfaction with the graduate profile was also confirmed by the members of the CAB and employers during interviews, who added that their feedback concerning improvements in the graduate profile is taken into account and improvements are communicated to them by the AU. The Panel acknowledges that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to seek employers' satisfaction level with the graduate profile and the high level of employers' satisfaction with the profile of BSAF programme graduates.

## 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**

- AU has a university-wide Quality Assurance (QA) Manual which covers all regulations and policies for the needs of the programmes. The Panel was provided with a copy of AU QA Manual, which was put into effect in the second semester 2019-2020. The Panel notes that there are comprehensive university-wide QA policies and regulations, which are regularly revised and are communicated to stakeholders *via* appropriate channels. The academic and support staff interviewed indicated that they are given snapshots of the policies and procedures during the staff induction day. The students and alumni also confirmed that they are briefed about the key academic policies and procedures during student orientations.
- AU has a QA management system in place at the institutional level, which is overseen by the CAQA. According to the SER, there are mechanisms for implementing QA policies *via* operation and activities of CAQA, which is tasked with ensuring consistent implementation of policies and procedures at all levels. The Panel noted, and also confirmed during the site visit interviews, the key role of CAQA in ensuring QA *via* actions (e.g., workshops) and activities of committees across the university and departments as detailed in the SER. The findings of CAQA's monitoring activities are communicated to relevant Departments and Colleges for remedial actions, when necessary.
- All of the QA-related policies and procedures are easily accessed by staff and students on the AU website and SharePoint and staff are updated on changes in QA policies *via* emails and meeting sessions on a regular basis. The Panel noted during the virtual interviews that the academic and support staff have a clear understanding of QA arrangements and their roles.
- As per the SER, the CAQA produces periodic QA reports which are submitted to the College Council for review, and thereafter to the TLAC and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC), which are chaired by the President of Academic Affairs

and the University President respectively, for action. The programme operations, in this respect, are monitored, evaluated, and improved *via* CAQA and its associated committees.

## **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 organogram of the CBF shows clear lines of responsibility cascading from the Dean to the two Department Chairpersons, one for the Department of Accounting, Finance and Banking and another for the Department of Management, Marketing and Information Systems. The Chairperson of the Department of Accounting, Finance and Banking is responsible for the operations of three Bachelor programmes in Accounting and Finance, Banking and Finance and Economics and Finance. The total number of students in the three programmes is 419 students and the number of faculty members is 40 at the CBF. The Panel notes that there are no programme coordinators and most committees operate at the institutional level. The Panel discussed these issues with the senior management who confirmed the current arrangements and explained that the current organizational chart provides an efficient management of the three programmes and reflects the fall in undergraduate student numbers admitted to the College on a year-on-year basis since 2016. Nonetheless, the Panel advises the College to consider appointing programme coordinators and adding committees at the college and department levels.
- The Panel reviewed the mechanisms in place to ensure effective management of the BSAF programme as outlined in the SER. The Panel further reviewed a sample of the Department Council's and the College Council's minutes of meetings and the University Bylaws. The Panel met with senior management and QA staff and discussed the existing reporting lines and decision-making process. Based on the provided evidence and the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel is of the view that the existing reporting lines are clear and ensure effective communication and decision-making for the BSAF programme.
- The University Bylaws state the roles and responsibilities of the various institutional and programme management and leadership committees which include the Board of Directors, Board of Trustees, University Council, College Council and Department Councils. The Department Council, under the leadership of the Department Chairperson, is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Department of Accounting, Finance and Banking which is responsible for the BSAF as well as the other two bachelor's degrees. Issues raised at Department Council meetings are reported to the College Council for further consideration. The terms of reference for the different management posts and committees are clearly stipulated in the University Bylaws.

- The Panel reviewed relevant materials in the SER as well as the associated supporting material on the academic responsibilities and custodianship provided to the Panel. According to the SER the Department Chairperson is responsible for the custodianship of the academic standards of the programme, while the Dean oversees the implementation of the rules and regulations of the University within the College as a whole. Both the Department Chairperson and the Dean work in coordination with their respective Councils and other units such as CAQA, CME and Student Affairs in fulfilling their roles. The Panel discussed this issue with faculty and QA staff and noted that they were aware of the mechanisms in place for this purpose in line with statements made in the SER.
- The Panel reviewed the management arrangements of the BSAF programme as described in the SER and discussed this further with the senior management and Quality Management and Assurance staff. In addition, the Panel found that the roles and responsibilities of the various university and programme management and leadership committees are clearly stated in the University Bylaws and demonstrated in the organizational chart of the College. Thus, the Panel notes that there are mechanisms in place to ensure that this programme is managed effectively and responsibly and acknowledges that the programme management is appropriate and is fit for the purpose.

### **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: Addressed**

- The SER indicates that AU has appropriate arrangements in place for the annual internal evaluation of its academic programmes. The Panel was provided with the Annual Programme Review Procedures; however, the Panel was not provided with a comprehensive annual evaluation report of the BSAF programme. The provided Programme Evaluation Reports of external evaluators are evaluating mainly the aims, mission, curriculum structure, CILOs and PILOs in 2-3 years-time. The Panel was also provided with a sample of the End of Semester Reports, which was initiated and implemented from AY 2020-2021. The Panel found that these reports provide tables for CILOs and PILOs and their achievements, all of which appear to be achieved for the three programmes offered by the Department for both the first and second semesters of AY 2020-2021. The End of Semester Reports list the courses which are verified, textbooks to be followed and methods used for teaching; however, these reports do not contain detailed evaluations of courses, such as their grade distributions, number of students taking the course and retention rates, course/faculty evaluation data, analysis of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and comparisons with previous years and other programmes achievements, etc. The Panel recommends that the College should revise its

End of Semester Reports to include detailed information and evaluations of courses and KPIs of the BSAF programme.

- In addition, the Panel was provided with course files, which contain a set of appropriately compiled documents of the courses; however, the Panel could not identify a course report where all these documents would be summarized. The Panel is of the view that the programme would benefit from preparing course reports that include student numbers, grade distributions, retention rates, course/faculty evaluation results, achievements of CILOs and suggestions for improvements. Such reports could be reviewed by the TLAC and discussed at the Department Council. The information in course reports could be also used in developing the End of Semester Reports. The Panel, thus, advises the College to consider preparing course reports that contain relevant and detailed information about each course that can be used in giving useful feedback to course instructors and in developing the End of Semester Reports.
- As indicated in the SER, CAQA is the body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the annual programme review process. The Panel learned from the interview sessions that CAQA requires all Departments to document the feedback obtained during the review process and identify appropriate actions for improvement. Furthermore, as stated above CAQA has recently introduced End of Semester Reports that include a review of the programme structure, courses, assessment and resources allocated. The Panel was provided with CAQA's summary report analysis of the End of Semester Reports and a recent Report of the 2021 Operational Plan whose follow-up is to be carried out in the upcoming year.
- AU has a comprehensive policy for conducting periodic programme review. The detailed requirements/arrangements are covered in AU Quality Manual. AU conducts periodic review of the BSAF programme every three years. The Panel reviewed this policy and the Process for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes and is of the view that the policy is comprehensive and appropriate for the periodic review of the BSAF programme.
- Prior to making a revision and improvement to an existing programme, the Department conducts a benchmarking study with similar programmes and seeks feedback from stakeholders such as the CAB members, external moderators, students, alumni and employers. Furthermore, the BSAF programme is reviewed by an external evaluator who prepares a report on the appropriateness of the aims and objectives, programme study plan, graduate attributes, CILOs and PILOs every two to three years' time. The BSAF programme team collates feedback and comments from internal and external stakeholders (meetings and surveys) and prepares End of Semester Reports, which are discussed at the Department Council and College Council. Recommendations requiring major changes (e.g., adding a new course) go to the curriculum committee to be considered and implemented. There are thus mechanisms in place for proper implementation of periodic reviews and associated improvement plan as detailed in the SER and related policies. The Panel discussed these mechanisms with the QA staff and acknowledges that these

mechanisms are fit for the purpose and suggests that the periodic review should be done every four years after the graduation of each cohort.

#### **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: Partially Addressed**

- The SER states that regular benchmarking, within the framework of the Benchmarking policy, is carried out to verify the comparability of the programme's academic standards with other similar programmes in Bahrain, regionally and internationally. The Panel discussed the benchmarking process with faculty and noted that the BSAF programme has been benchmarked against two local, two regional and two international programmes as stated in the SER. The Panel noticed that these benchmarks were all informal and the information for the benchmarking was mainly obtained from the web pages of the universities. The Panel is of the view that benchmarking needs to be done not only for improvement in curriculum but also for the enhancement of all other aspects of this programme including its KPIs. The Panel thus recommends that the College should carry out formal benchmarking for assessing and comparing BSAF programme's key performance indicators against similar programmes.
- The Panel reviewed the provided evidence and discussed with faculty how the results of benchmarks are used to inform the decision making of the BSAF programme in practice. The SER states that an outcome of the Department's benchmarking exercise has led to the introduction of new courses (e.g., ACCT441). The Panel acknowledges that benchmarking outcomes are used to inform decision making in order to improve the academic content of this programme and to maintain alignment with international standards.
- The Panel notes that structured comments and feedback are collected regularly from internal and external stakeholders *via* the CME. The Panel discussed data collection methods with the QA staff and acknowledges that there are formal mechanisms in place for this purpose. The Panel had the opportunity to review a number of surveys, such as the Course/Instructor Evaluation Survey, Student Satisfaction Survey, Alumni Satisfaction Survey, Employer Satisfaction Survey, CAB Survey, and Industry Site-Supervisor Survey and found that with the exception of the Course/Instructor Survey, all other surveys either had limited questions (alumni survey only 6) or questions which would not be suitable for the participants i.e. not fit for the purpose. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the contents of the surveys given to internal and external stakeholders comprise appropriate questions that elicit useful feedback and enable informed decision making.

- The collected data from the different surveys are analysed by the CME and forwarded to the Department Council to take the necessary decisions in relation to the areas that require improvement. During the virtual site visit interviews with faculty, the Panel was able to confirm that the collected comments from the BSAF programme's internal and external stakeholders are acted upon and inform the decisions taken by the programme senior management. The Panel is, however, of the view that there is a need for a more systematic data collection and analysis and advises that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that data from internal and external stakeholders are collected and collated at the same intervals.
- The Panel noted that there are mechanisms in place to implement improvements and to communicate the outcomes to stakeholders. The Panel learned from interviews with students, alumni, employers and the CAB members that students are informed of improvements to programme in class. Alumni and employers are notified through annual alumni gatherings which are conducted by the Professional Relations Department, and the CAB members are notified during their meetings.
- The Panel notes that stakeholders are, by and large, satisfied with changes implemented based on their feedback. The evidence presented to the Panel shows that the CAB members have expressed their satisfaction with recent revision to the BSAF programme. Based on the evidence and site visit interviews with stakeholders, the Panel acknowledges that stakeholders of the BSAF programme are satisfied with the implemented changes based on their feedback.

#### **Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs**

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

#### **Judgment: Addressed**

- The CBF has a functioning CAB. The CAB was re-formulated in April 2021 and approved by the University Council for a term of three consecutive academic years. The responsibilities of the CAB are stipulated in its terms of reference to include 'providing consultative feedback on the overall programme structure' and 'providing linkages with industry'. The provided evidence shows that the CAB includes discipline experts, industry representatives, employers and alumni. The SER states that the CAB meets on a regular basis to ensure that the views of employers and alumni are considered in programme reviews. This was confirmed at the virtual interview sessions. The Panel is satisfied with the credentials of the CAB members and their contribution to the BSAF programme's academic development.

- Feedback is systematically used to inform decision-making process for the BSAF programme *via* regular meetings of the CAB. The Panel interviewed members of the CAB and noted that their views are obtained *via* surveys and regular meetings organized for this purpose and are used to inform decision making. The Panel was also provided with evidence showing that the recommendations of the CAB are implemented.
- AU has a Policy on Needs Assessment and Analysis which was approved by the University Council in July 2014. The SER states that the policy seeks to maintain an up-to-date awareness of market and societal needs and future employment opportunities in the relevant field of study. The implemented mechanisms, as per the policy, includes assessing and benefitting from published market research studies. The Panel interviewed faculty members and discussed this issue with them and is of the view that the mechanisms in place are fit for purpose.
- The Panel was provided with supporting evidence of a Market Needs Study and Employability research which was conducted to assess the future skill requirements for banking and finance. The study had identified 'communication skills and 'creativity and digital technology know-how' among the key skills that would be required in future. The future skills mapping with the BSAF programme at AU shows that the graduate attributes and PILOs are aligned with the future skills and competencies. This indicates that the BSAF programme is relevant and up-to-date.
- The Panel observed that there is a mechanism set in place to analyze the findings of the market study, various survey results, inputs from CAB, employers and alumni in the Department Council Meetings in order to update and enhance the employability of the BSAF programme. The Panel has not, however, found evidence of a systematic and well-documented monitoring and review mechanism for this purpose in place, and thus recommends that the College should regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to ensure the relevancy and employability of the BSAF programme.

## V. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the 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 Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance of College of Business and Finance offered by the Ahlia University (AU).**

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

1. The opportunities the BSAF Programme provides to its students, which include participating in a variety of competitions, where they develop their practical application of theories, independent and lifelong learning competencies.
2. The arrangements in place to support the professional development of the academic staff, in particular, the sponsorship of their postgraduate studies.
3. The arrangement with Brunel University to develop the faculty's capacity for PhD research supervision.
4. Several workshops have been conducted to support students in handling stress and maintaining a balanced mental health and well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. The mechanisms the Department has in place to ensure that graduates' achievements meet the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.
6. The appropriate procedures for selecting internal and external moderators and the suitable mechanisms to improve the programme based on their inputs, which are monitored and evaluated properly.
7. The research projects of the BSAF students are published in reputable international journals.

**In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Ahlia University should:**

1. Review and regularly update its Risk Management Plan Register, to ensure that the potential risks related to the quality of the programme are mitigated appropriately.
2. Revise the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes in the next periodic review, to have simplified sentences with fewer verbs to make it easy for their assessments.
3. Review the Course Intended Learning Outcomes to reduce their number, improve their measurability, and ensure that courses in the third- and fourth-year courses are more focused on critical thinking and subject specific skills.
4. Carefully review the corresponding mappings of Course Intended Learning Outcomes to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes to ensure effective assessment of achieved learning.

5. Develop the college's capacity to assess the Course Intended Learning Outcomes and map the assessment to them appropriately.
6. Develop a formal mechanism for ensuring that the work-based assessment conducted by the site supervisor is standardised.
7. Review and improve the content of the site supervisors survey to include elements other than evaluating the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes, and to ensure the proper utilization of the site supervisors' and the students' feedback in improving the effectiveness of the internship course.
8. Develop a clear policy on how a student is allowed to take a capstone project, either individually or within a group, for a fair and effective assessment of the performance of the students.
9. Develop a student evaluation survey for the Capstone Project in order to assess its effectiveness.
10. Develop clear assessment criteria for the group projects to ensure effective assessment of each Course Intended Learning Outcomes on an individual basis of each member of a group
11. Revise its End of Semester Reports to include detailed information and evaluations of courses and KPIs of the programme.
12. Carry out formal benchmarking for assessing and comparing the programme's key performance indicators against similar programmes.
13. Ensure that the contents of the surveys given to internal and external stakeholders comprise appropriate questions that elicit useful feedback and enable informed decision making.
14. Regularly review and evaluate the effectiveness of the mechanisms used to ensure the relevancy and employability of the BSAF programme.