



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 Management Information
Systems
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 21-24 November 2021

HA044-C3-R044

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Acronyms

ACID	Ahlia Centre for Information and Documentation
ADREG	Admission and Registration Information System
AQAC	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee
AU	Ahlia University
AUQMS	Ahlia University Quality Management System
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSMIS	Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CME	Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DoAR	Directorate of Admission and Registration
HEC	Higher Education Council
ICDL	International Computer Driver Licence
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICTC	Information and Communication Technology Centre
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
TLAC	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
SER	Self-evaluation Report

I. Introduction

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

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

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

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

Standard 1: The Learning Programme

Standard 2: Efficiency of the Programme

Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

Standard 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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

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

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

II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Ahlia University
College/ Department*	College of Business and Finance
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems (BSMIS)
Qualification Approval Number	Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. (1626-03) of 2001 Higher Education Council Letter No. (81 -2008 / أ ت م) of 2008 Higher Education Council Decision No. (93) of Meeting (11/2008) of 2008
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years after validation date
Number of Units*	134
NQF Credit	548
Programme Aims*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To equip the students with knowledge and skills including programming design tools and techniques required for managing business information systems that is required to succeed in the job market within the region that are constantly evolving as technology trends change. 2. To provide students with competence in applying practical and non-practical skills in the areas of business information, data analytics and technology to prepare the student to pursue a career in business and management information systems. 3. To provide students with the necessary analytical skills to develop based on intellectual research information system solutions for any type of organization based on contemporary technology management approaches. 4. To develop student's innovation and leadership potential through a variety of soft skills such as communication, teamwork and global citizenship. 5. To enable students to align IT strategies to sustainable business strategies to manage information systems in organization taking

	<p>into account strategic information systems and professional responsibility.</p>
<p>Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*</p>	<p>A. Knowledge and Understanding</p> <p>A1. Concepts and Theories: Demonstrate detailed and critical knowledge and understanding of the advanced concepts, principles, techniques, paradigms and theories of contemporary management information systems leading to the competitiveness of a given organizations</p> <p>A2. Contemporary Trends, problems and Research: Demonstrate an informed and critical awareness of the current problems, research issues and methods, technological advancements pushing the frontier of knowledge in the field of Management Information Systems</p> <p>A3. Professional Responsibility: Operate specialized level with significant professional responsibility related management information systems standards to manage information systems infrastructure within the organizational social boundaries.</p> <p>B. Subject-Specific Skills</p> <p>B1. Problem Solving: Use specialised level to identify, formalize, and solve management information systems problems related to business frameworks.</p> <p>B2. Modelling and Design: Relate some specialized theories and concepts to design and develop models for management information systems, components, or processes to meet desired business needs within realistic constraints resulting in business competitiveness.</p> <p>B3. Application of Methods and Tool: Demonstrate creativity in the application of advanced methods and tools in terms of software used in modern practices.</p> <p>C. Critical-Thinking Skills</p> <p>C1. Analytic skills: Use range of approaches to critically analyse and determine sustainable and secure management information systems</p> <p>C2. Synthetic Skills: Synthesize and evaluate the magnitude of management information systems issues to support the organization performance efficiency at strategic level.</p> <p>C3. Creative Skills: Demonstrate insight and creativity to produce innovative management information systems solutions.</p>

	<p>D. General and Transferable Skills (other skills relevant to employability and personal development)</p> <p>D1. Communication Skills: Express and communicate specialist ideas professionally, persuasively and effectively, in written and oral form, to a diverse range of audiences and stakeholders.</p> <p>D2. Teamwork and Leadership: Operate at specialist level with responsibility to work in team with decision making responsibilities related to management information systems.</p> <p>D3. Organizational and Developmental skills: Engage at specialised level in variable contexts related to life-long learning and continuing self-development to hone professional and organizational skills and global citizenship</p> <p>D4. Ethics and Social Responsibility: Use specialized level of skills to apply ethical code of conduct related to management information systems and respond to social responsibility and global citizenship.</p>
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* Mandatory fields

III. Judgment Summary

The Programme's Judgment: Confidence

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

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

- As per the Self-evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation, the University Vision and Mission statements direct the formulation of a University-wide five-year strategic plan, which is translated into annual Operational Plans at the university and college levels. During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that the Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System (BSMIS) programme has been designed to be aligned with the plans of Ahlia University (AU) and the College of Business and Finance, as reflected in the Programme Specification and AU's graduate attributes, which have been developed at a university level. The Panel concludes that there is a clear academic planning framework for the programme related to the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the College. The Panel appreciates the planning framework devised from a strategic to programme level. The Panel also notes the compliance of the BSMIS programme with regulatory bodies such as the Higher Education Council (HEC) and its alignment with the International Professional Certification Control Objectives for Information and Related Technologies (COBIT) 5 and International Computer Driver Licence (ICDL).
- Potential risks including those related to the quality of the programme and its delivery are managed at the university, college and programme levels. A university standing committee chaired by the Vice President for Administration and Finance oversees risk management at the university level. The College Council identifies potential risks, and a Risk Assessment and Management Plan Committee convenes meetings and maintains a risk register. Furthermore, the Department Council may identify and raise its risks in the College Council. During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel was informed of various decisions the College has made in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to enable and ensure

the quality of online course delivery and assessments while simultaneously ensuring the health and safety of its students and staff.

- The BSMIS Programme adheres to the requirement of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). It was placed at level 8 on the NQF in 2017 and re-validated during 2019. The programme title 'Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems' is concise and indicative of the qualification type and content. This is also reflected in the sample BSMIS Certificate and Transcript. The programme description and documentation can be accessed online *via* the AU website.
- The BSMIS programme aims are set out in the Programme Specification document and are clear and appropriate for the degree. As per the SER, these aims have been revised as part of the periodic programme review process and in consultation with the College External Advisory Board, which includes members from the industry. The programme aims are mapped to the Vision and Mission of the College of Business and Finance and to AU's Mission and Strategic Plan.

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: Addressed

- Ten generic graduate attributes have been identified, and they are mapped against one or more of the BSMIS Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). From the documentation provided and during virtual interviews, the Panel learned about various activities, including guest speakers, field trips, conferences, and events that help in developing these graduate attributes in BSMIS students. The Panel was also informed that professional certifications such as COBIT and ICDL encourage lifelong learning and professional development. The Panel is satisfied with the range of co-curricular arrangements for BSMIS students, aiming to develop the University's graduate attributes.
- The PILOs set out in the Programme Specification document are appropriately written and mapped against programme aims and graduate attributes. This mapping illustrates that the PILOs for the BSMIS are appropriate to the programme's type and level. The examination of a sample of course files indicates that Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are included in the course specification documents that are set out in a standard template. The examination of course files also indicates appropriate mapping and alignment of CILOs to PILOs.

- According to the Quality Assurance Manual, to ensure that the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) remain relevant, periodic reviews are to be conducted every three years. While no formal benchmarking exercise has been carried out, the Panel was informed of desktop research that had been conducted to compare the programme to others locally, regionally and internationally, as well as to that of professional bodies. Furthermore, the AU Assessment Manual makes explicit reference to the NQF and its requirements and provides guidelines to ensure that there is an appropriate ILO-Assessment linkage.

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: Partially Addressed

- The BSMIS study plan is a blend of courses from different specialisations and is offered over four years. The BSMIS programme consists of 134 credits. The courses are classified as 20 credit hours university requirements, 24 credit hours college requirements, 72 credit hours programme requirements, 6 credit hours are allocated for programme major electives, 3 credit hours are allocated for the internship, 6 credit hours for free electives, and 3 credits for humanities. The BSMIS study plan is designed with a selection of course prerequisites to ensure gaining the required PILOs. It shows an appropriate year-on-year progression with suitable student workload.
- At the inception of the BSMIS programme, the curriculum closely matched Brunel University, UK. Brunel recognised the AU BSMIS programme as a Bachelor's Degree level credential equivalent to the counterpart it offers. However, as part of a 2021 periodic review, desktop research was conducted to compare the AU BSMIS programme to equivalent programmes locally, regionally, and in four international universities. In 2019 a Programme Evaluation Report was provided by an external evaluator. The Panel learned during the virtual interviews that, as an outcome of the review, new core courses have been introduced, including Business Data Analytics (ITMA304), Business Cloud Computing (ITMA326), and Information System Auditing (ITMA423). Furthermore, it was emphasised during the interviews that the students are now required to take two programme major electives instead of one. The list of courses was expanded to include courses related to Entrepreneurship and Digital Innovation (ITMA310), Business Intelligence (ITMA414), Artificial Intelligence Application in Business (ITMA418), and E-Government Concepts and Implementation (ITMA427). During the interviews, it was explained to the Panel that the changes are implemented in the 2021-2022 academic year.

- The BSMIS utilizes a Curriculum Skills map to ensure that the PILOs and CILOs are mapped with a fair distribution of theory versus practice, and knowledge versus skills. During the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that as part of the adjustments to online learning due to Covid-19, a continuous assessment approach was adopted, placing greater emphasis on the practical application. In terms of breadth, the BSMIS programme, as shown in the Programme Specification document, is a blend of courses from different specialisations, including Computer Science, Management, Marketing, Finance, Accounting, Engineering, Humanities, Social Sciences, Linguistics, and Information Systems. In terms of depth, the Panel notes that the revised BSMIS programme includes more MIS courses. However, during the virtual interviews, the Panel received several differing answers from the various parties, and no consensus was reached regarding the programming language used to teach programming. Some mentioned Java, some said C++, and others mentioned Python. The Panel recommends that the College should focus on mastering at least one programme language in the BSMIS programme to ensure depth and ease when students are collaborating on projects. The Panel suggests Python as the standard programming language as it is widely taught by universities and used extensively in business; this will support current and future students.
- The Panel examined a sample of the provided course files. The textbook dates supplied ranged from 2012 to 2019 (for two courses, the textbook dates are not shown). In some instances, additional readings were provided. It is noted that the External Moderator for one course recommends an updated version of the textbook. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that textbooks and references for all BSMIS courses are reviewed and updated and that course materials make more use of recent research findings and current professional practices.

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

- AU has formulated a Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2025) that addresses policy issues. Initiative 2 of the plan is 'To promote and Support Excellence through outcome based Impactful Teaching and Learning'. The Panel notes that the plan's performance indicators include 'Innovative Teaching Methods, Virtual Teaching and Learning, and Adaptation of smart teaching tools'. During virtual interviews, the Panel was informed about other teaching methods such as promoting self-directed group learning, using case studies, and using MS Teams as a learning platform during Covid-19. The implementation of this plan is monitored by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC), in coordination with the Centre for Accreditation and Quality

Assurance (CAQA). Furthermore, as part of its annual review, the Department should assess the appropriateness of teaching and learning methods and report on related events.

- The BSMIS Programme Specification and the sample of course files provided describe a range of teaching and learning methods, including lectures, group work, course projects, assignments, and case studies, which are all appropriate, given the nature of the BSMIS programme, and enable the attainment of the ILOs. E-learning takes place using the Moodle platform. In addition, the Panel was informed that MS Teams had been used extensively for online teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. The effectiveness of online teaching and learning was measured by obtaining student feedback on the overall experience and received 91.88% satisfaction.
- Lifelong learning is incorporated into the goals of the College, and the Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan (2021-2025) in Initiative 3, which aims 'To develop a Range of Teaching and Learning Strategies that provide students with opportunities to enhance their employability and foster research and life-long learning'. This is to be achieved through industry-based internships (e.g., the BSMIS Internship course INTR 468), appropriate teaching and learning strategies, and promoting skills for an entrepreneurial mindset and research. The Panel learned from faculty and students, during the virtual interviews, that various formal and informal learning activities had been held. These include industry guest speakers, workshops, field trips, competitions (e.g., INJAZ Bahrain, TradeQuest), events (e.g., Together Safe (SAFE) Stand Against Fear & Extremism), and career days. The Panel also notes that the BSMIS programme has been aligned with COBIT 5 as professional certification in terms of content. This was confirmed during the virtual interviews as well.

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

- The AU Assessment Manual sets out a wide range of policies and procedures related to assessing courses. It has been revised recently to ensure that it complies with the HEC standards and NQF requirements and is now in its fifth version. The Manual covers policies and procedures related to the University's assessment design, transparency, and assessment security. It also includes regulations for marking assessments and their internal and external verification and moderation, and approval. Finally, it covers feedback on student assessments, students who challenge their grades, appeals processes, and academic misconduct. Every semester, the Dean is required to report to the College Council and the TLAC on the implementation of the assessment policy and procedures.

- The Assessment Manual is made available to academic staff and students through the website and Ahlia SharePoint. A faculty development session was conducted with all academic staff highlighting the revisions made to the Manual, which is sent to external assessor's/examiners once they have been appointed, as clarified during the virtual interviews. It is also summarised in the Student Handbook and drawn to students' attention during their induction day.
- The Panel notes that course assessments must include formative methods mapped to the ILOs. Moreover, students receive guidance on approaching assessed tasks and feedback on their learning to aid further understanding within a course. The description and weighting of assessment tasks and their relevant outcomes are provided in the course files examined by the Panel. According to the Assessment Manual, students are to receive prompt and detailed feedback. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the promptness and quality of feedback. They also noted that this feedback was often discussed in lectures.
- Internal and external moderation procedures of assessments are set out in the Assessment Manual. An internal moderation committee consisting of the instructor, a course verifier who must have the requisite expertise in the course, and the Chairperson monitors the assessment process both before the delivery of the course and after the final examinations, as clarified in the virtual interviews. Moderation of any major assessments weighted at 20% or above is validated at the pre-assessment stage and adjusted if necessary. In post-assessment moderation, the internal moderation committee completes a form and selects a sample of student work with high, average, and low scores and places them in the course file. The internal moderation process is then verified by an external assessor who checks for alignment of tasks with ILOs, the appropriateness of the assessment task to the course and its level, and fairness and accuracy in marking and grades, as clarified in the virtual interviews and the submitted evidence. The Panel is satisfied with the BSMIS staff's awareness of the assessment procedures and students' awareness of the assessment policy.
- An Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy and Procedure are included in the Assessment Manual. The Manual covers policies and procedures related to the university's assessment design, transparency and security of assessment. It also includes regulations for the marking of assessments and their internal and external verification and moderation and approval. Finally, it covers feedback on the student assessments, student challenge of grade, appeals processes, and academic misconduct. Interviewed students confirmed their understanding of the appeal procedure.
- It is worth noting that, during students' orientation and at the beginning of each course, students are informed about academic misconduct and plagiarism issues. In a case of misconduct, a Discipline Committee is convened to assess and carry out disciplinary procedures and impose any penalties in line with the policy. No evidence was provided

of any disciplinary committee having been convened, and the Panel learned that there had not been any occurrence of cases of misconduct that would have required a disciplinary hearing.

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

- AU Admission Policy and BSMIS specific entry requirements are provided in several documents accessible to prospective students, including the university website, Admission Brochure, and Student Handbook. The BSMIS admission requirements were recently revised to include programme specific criteria. This consists of an adequate score in the Secondary School Certificate (Tawjihia) or its equivalent, English proficiency requirements, and Mathematics proficiency requirements. Students proficient in Mathematics and English are exempted from the orientation programme. When a student does not meet the proficiency levels, the Directorate of Admission and Registration (DoAR) conducts placement tests in coordination with the College of Arts and Science. The student must attend the orientation programme in their first semester. It was communicated during the virtual interviews that AU welcomes all students in a transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory way as admission is based on merit, which is in line with the revised Admission Policy.
- The Panel finds the admission requirements appropriate for the programme and consistent with local and international standards. In addition, the University Admission Policy is designed to ensure full compliance with the HEC rules and regulations relevant to student admission and credit transfer. The applications are evaluated per AU's Admission Policy. The process includes preparing and conducting placement tests to ensure that applicants meet programmes' specific requirements regarding the Mathematics and English language tests scores of 60%. The Panel learned during the interviews that there had been a drop in BSMIS student numbers. In 2015-2016, there were 105 students enrolled, and in 2020-2021, there were 49. The Panel recommends that the College should investigate the reasons for the low number of enrolled students in the BSMIS programme.

- AU's Admission Policy is regularly revised based on student performance and stakeholder feedback. While no formal benchmarking exercise has been conducted, the Panel was informed of desktop research to compare the admission requirements of other local, regional, and international universities. Transferring students from recognised institutions are accepted onto the programme in compliance with HEC regulations and according to the revised Admission Policy. The programme specific entry requirements are reviewed regularly by the department, college, and university councils.

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

- The Academic Staff Bylaws include chapters on faculty appointment, promotion, and performance evaluation. In addition, there is the Human Resource Policy and Procedures Handbook, which refers to hiring based on merit and ends with the University Council for final approval, after which an offer of appointment is made. The Human Resource Directorate assumes the responsibility for the induction of new staff members. An Overall Annual Faculty Evaluation Process is followed and is linked to the Faculty Professional Development Plan. Evidence is provided of several appointments and promotions over the past few years. During the virtual interviews, the faculty explained to the Panel how helpful they found having a mentor assigned to them when settling in at AU.
- AU has a new Research Plan 2021-2025 and Research Rules and Regulations. The publications show evidence of research activity and contribution to knowledge creation and dissemination. The virtual interviews highlighted that available funding, among other incentives, encourages staff's quality research outputs.
- AU has an approved detailed policy for Teaching Load. This policy covers teaching and supervision responsibilities only and is aligned with the HEC requirements. Although the interviews revealed a good understanding of the workload allocation, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the workload allocation by considering community engagement and other extra-curricular activities as part of it.
- Staff qualifications indicate that most academics in the College have a PhD degree and collectively cover all the areas of specialisation related to the programme. According to the statistical information provided, in 2020-2021, there were 40 academic staff in the College. This number has remained reasonably constant since 2017, with the majority employed on a full-time basis. Of the 40 faculty members, four dedicate at least 25% to

50% of their time to the BSMIS programme. Several other faculty members service the programme from various departments, including the Department of Information Technology. In 2020-2021, there were 42 full-time and seven part-time students registered in the programme.

- AU has a Professional Development Committee and Plan. The professional development needs of staff are identified annually based on performance appraisals and evaluations. Faculty members propose their requirements through a representative from the College on the Professional Development Committee. This includes being trained in research supervision. AU has an agreement with Brunel University to train research supervisors. Furthermore, the College develops its faculty members; for example, 16 faculty members were sponsored to do their PhD degree in the past five years.
- The retention rate of the College of Business and Finance faculty members was 92% in 2019 and 95% in 2020. It was explained to the Panel that two of the staff members who left are still affiliated with AU.

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 virtual tour and the SER indicate adequate classrooms and laboratories. The Information and Communication Technology Centre (ICTC) has clear roles and responsibilities. It ensures the implementation of the laboratory maintenance procedures, and that the relevant software is installed in classrooms and laboratories. All students can access the network/internet using their credentials on the university-wide free WiFi service. The Panel is satisfied with the support provided to students by laboratory technicians.
- There is evidence that the library resources are satisfactory for the BSMIS programme, i.e., books, journals, and databases. This includes 46 databases covering business, management, and information systems. Besides the hardcopy books, there are 12 thousand electronic books and 2.5 million e-journal articles. The faculty, during the virtual interviews, assured the Panel that they had appropriate resources to support the programme. In line with the Covid-19 pandemic, the library provided a service to the students to enable online purchase and delivery of textbooks. The Panel noted during the virtual interviews that students are satisfied with the current resources.

- There are several formal mechanisms in place for the maintenance of resources. For example, Initiative 5 of the new Teaching and Learning Excellence Plan aims to ‘ensure high quality support services that enhance student experience and support personal and professional development’ and has ‘Quality Support Services’ as a performance indicator with an annual target of student satisfaction of 85% or above. Also, ICTC maintains the Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure, which ensures the library’s maintenance. Furthermore, the virtual tour showed a well-equipped Health Clinic accommodated with a full-time medical professional who can handle minor health-related issues. In interviews, the Panel was advised that the clinic operated during regular office hours, and there is a contact number after working hours if medical assistance was needed when the facility is closed. Extra safeguards have been put in place to address health and safety during Covid-19, including shields in offices, social distancing, staff rotation and home working, sanitising, wearing masks, promoting vaccinations, running workshops on topics related to Covid-19, and promoting physical health and fitness through online yoga and spinning classes. Additionally, there are various security measures to ensure the safety of those on campus, including cameras and security personnel. The Panel is satisfied with the maintenance and health and safety measures on campus.

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

- The ADREG system is comprehensive and provides the necessary tools to manage the BSMIS programme needs. The system can run various reports to inform decision-making. These ADREG reports include monitoring student performance and identifying students at risk of academic failure. It can also generate reports related to faculty load, faculty distribution, resource and financial planning, and allocation. Additionally, ADREG generates information concerning the availability of venues to assist faculty and students. Moodle is AU’s Learning Management System and is partially synced with ADREG. Moodle provides the e-learning functionality to faculty and students for courses and enrolments and publishing of resources and activities.
- ADREG has a specific security module/feature for adding and controlling users, including assigning permissions/authorisations. In addition, the ICTC Server has a Backup & Restore procedure in case there is a server failure or breach. These Backup tapes are stored on AU premises for safety reasons. AU Authentication of Certification Policy and Procedure governs the issuing of certificates. Furthermore, certificates are printed from a single source, ADREG, where the students’ records are kept. The students’ certificates

accurately reflect the programme's title. Furthermore, ADREG has a dedicated graduation module.

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 Deanship of Student Affairs is primarily responsible for student support through various activities and services, including admission and registration; counselling; sports, cultural and social activities; complaints handling; accommodating students with special needs; and disseminating information. The Head of Student Support helps with all inquiries and liaisons between students and their academic advisors. The University has a Student Counselling Directorate that provides counselling services and offers various forms of help and assistance to students. In addition, the Dean of Student Affairs oversees internship placements and career guidance.
- As set out in the academic advising policy and procedure, each student is allocated an academic adviser, who they are expected to meet with at least once a semester to discuss their academic progress. The Student Counselling Directorate provides counselling services and various forms of help to students; and the Directorate follows up with the concerned departments regarding students on probation, student attendance, and progression. Students discuss their study plan, grades, and progress during these meetings to ensure that ILOs are met and the graduate attributes are achieved. Documentation of such meetings is registered on the ADREG system.
- The Deanship of Student Affairs is responsible for supporting students with special needs, and there is a policy for admitting students with special needs. After disclosing their special needs on the admission application form, AU Special Needs Admission Committee ensures that the required support is provided in terms of facilities, learning and examination needs, and activities participation. The equal opportunity approach by AU is reflected in the listing on the United Nations Platform for SDG5 related to Gender Equality, and the 3rd place that AU won in 2021 with Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ebrahim Al Khalifa Award for the Advancement of Bahraini Women. In the interviews, the active engagement of AU in equal opportunities was articulated by both internal and external stakeholders. The Panel appreciates AU's arrangements to cater for women's needs which have led to being awarded by several entities.

- AU has a Policy for Identifying and Supporting 'At Risk' Students. Students at risk of academic failure are identified through the ADREG system, which notifies their academic advisers about their at-risk status. These at-risk students are encouraged to regularly meet with their academic advisors. At-risk students are also discussed by the Department Council so that additional support can be provided. The Panel noted during the interviews that the students and alumni all commented positively, highlighting the support AU offers; this includes support for students at risk of academic failure; as there are various forms of student support, including generating reports using ADREG.
- The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) regularly surveys students and other AU stakeholders, e.g., members of the External Advisory Board, employers and alumni. During the interviews with the Panel, the students confirmed that they had all participated in multiple surveys. Some of the survey methods included telephone calls, emails, and text messages to follow up with those who did not respond. The students indicated that they felt that AU valued their feedback. During the interviews, it was also explained to the Panel that the surveys feedback is used to improve Support Services, such as upgrading the computer laboratories and updating the software. The Panel appreciates the student support provided by AU's academics and support staff.

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*

- The AU Assessment Manual provides a framework for assessment in the BSMIS programme by setting out policies, procedures and guidelines for good practices. The Manual includes a procedure to ensure appropriate ILO-assessment linkages. The mapping of CILOs to assessment tasks and their weighting are provided to students in the course specification documents. The Panel notes that some of the courses include practical or technical tasks such as developing 'an online shop using Blue Griffon Software or a software of their own choice' such as the System Analysis and Design (ITMA 411) course or developing a website such as the E-commerce (ITMA 401) course. The Panel also notes that adjustments have been made for online teaching and assessment during Covid-19.
- Internal and external verification and moderation processes are intended to ensure appropriate alignment of the assessment with the learning outcomes and graduate attributes. The course syllabus/specification is to be verified before the commencement of the course. Examples of the application of this internal verification process were provided and demonstrate changes made. In addition, a more extensive external evaluation of the programme takes place every two years. The external evaluator's Report is reviewed by the Departmental Council. From virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the TLAC in coordination with the CAQA monitors the processes of verification and moderation and makes adjustments to the process when needed and the Assessment Manual has been updated to reflect changes such as the recent inclusion of NQF requirements. The Panel concluded that assessment is effective and aligned with learning outcomes, to ensure attainment of the graduate attributes and academic standards of the programme.

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

- Matters of academic misconduct and plagiarism policies and procedure are included in the AU Assessment Manual. At the student orientation and in the classroom, academic misconduct and plagiarism are dealt with as topics and academic misconduct is included in the guidelines for the undergraduate project. Furthermore, workshops were held with faculty to explain assessment and integrity practices and to discuss changes in assessments due to Covid-19, as clarified during virtual interviews with faculty members. According to the Assessment Manual, the University identifies six types of misconduct that it aims to prevent, which include: plagiarism; data falsification; use of third-parties (tacit personation) or cheat-ware sites; free-riding collusion; recycling collusion; and active personation. The Panel concluded from the virtual interviews, that faculty and students are fully aware of the procedures of detecting and dealing with academic misconduct.
- The Academic Research and Intellectual Contribution Committee is responsible for the adherence of research to the core principles and related specifications. To check cases of plagiarism, AU is using Turnitin, which is applied for submitted assignments through Moodle. In the AU's Assessment Manual, it is stated that the accepted similarity rate is 30% for all undergraduate assessments. The responsible person to monitor plagiarism is the course instructor, and the supervisor of the final project. Plagiarism checks are conducted on major assignments and the undergraduate projects. Any penalties to be applied are discussed in the Department Council.
- Policies for academic misconduct describe a clear procedure for dealing with misconduct cases, based on the type and category. This involves a report to the Dean of Student Affairs and a hearing before the Disciplinary Committee of the University in case of repeated offenses. However, the Panel learned in the interviews, that there have been no 'major' cases for any academic misconduct from BSMIS students. The Panel is of the view that the absence of cases of academic misconduct would be an exceptional situation and contradicts typical experiences at other higher education institutions. But even if this would be the case, it is necessary to also document minor cases, so as to be aware of repeated behavioural patterns. The Panel recommends that AU should introduce a register of minor incidents of students' academic misconduct.

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

- According to the Assessment Manual, pre-assessment verification and post-assessment moderation is carried out on all major assessments weighted at least 20% or more. The responsible entity to organize the process is the Internal Verification/Moderation Committee, which is formed every semester. The criteria for selecting the members of this committee are published and set out in the Assessment Manual. The committee consists of instructors and course verifiers who must have the requisite expertise in the courses as clarified during the interviews. The internal moderation is required for course syllabus-specifications, major pieces of work and the final examinations. Moderation of any major assessments weighted at 20% or above, is validated at the pre-assessment stage and adjusted, if necessary, as clarified during interviews. The process for the post-moderation is carried out by the Department Council which makes decisions about the grades. The Chairperson monitors the moderation process, as well as CAQA together with TLAC. Three samples of assignments with high, average, low grades are reviewed to verify the ILO alignments, the appropriateness of the tasks and the fairness and accuracy of the grading. The outcome is recorded in the required Internal Verification of Course Syllabus-Specification form. The Panel is satisfied with the internal moderation process.
- The Dean and the CAQA together with TLAC are responsible for the appropriate management of the external moderation of assessments and the selection of external moderators. The selection criteria for external moderators are clearly defined, and include the formal academic degree requirements and knowledge, awareness, experience and competency in the relevant subjects. External moderation is used for the course syllabus, major pieces of course work, final examinations, grade distributions and the application of appropriate standards in a course. In their report, external moderators can make recommendations. One example of a recommendation that was implemented was to change the textbook for the Management Information Systems (ITMA201) course. During the interviews, the Panel was informed that the TLAC monitors the implementation of the external moderation process and evaluates its effectiveness, together with the Dean and CAQA. The Panel concluded that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.

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

- Since the academic year 2017-2018, AU has an internship (INTR400) as a mandatory course requirement for all BSMIS students. Students can register in this course when they have completed at least 90 credit hours and have a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0. The internship requires at least 240 working hours. The Internship Office supports the students in finding appropriate positions and all the internship files, which include reports and completed evaluation, forms are available on the ADREG system. The procedures and structure of the internship course are explained in detail in the Internship Programme Guidelines document, which describes the responsibilities of the Dean, academic supervisors, site supervisors and students. This refers to finding an internship position, the assessment requirements, as well as to the work-related responsibilities and tasks. The assigned academic supervisors and the site supervisors are collectively responsible for the supervision and evaluations that are required during the internship period.
- The BSMIS Internship (INTR 468) course ILOs are mapped against most of the PILOs and show a strong contribution to the overall achievement of the programme's aims and graduate attributes. However, in interviews, the Panel was informed that during their internship, students should ideally be able to conduct data science analytics, which in its current form, their degree does not adequately prepare them for. The Panel is of the view that students should be better equipped for the practical aspects of the BSMIS Internship's work-based learning. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should place/put the 'Introduction to Data Analytics' course (ITCS431) as a core course instead of putting it as an elective course.
- The assessment is based on the evaluation of academic and site supervisors. As per the SER, the site supervisor is responsible for 50% of the grade. There is an academic supervisor evaluation, weighted at 10% and the rest of the assessment is divided up between two bi-monthly reports by the students (each 10%) and a student final report (20%).
- Evaluating the effectiveness of the internship programme is based on a survey filled out by the site supervisors. This also includes a direct measurement of the PILO achievements. The Panel notes that in the interviews the involved work site employers were very satisfied with the students, as well as with the relevant information from the academic supervisors and the continuous involvement of the academic supervisors with the internship students.

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

Where there is a capstone project or thesis/dissertation component, there are clear policies and procedures for supervision and evaluation which state the responsibilities and duties of both the

supervisor and students, and there is a mechanism to monitor the related implementations and improvements.

Judgment: Addressed

- According to the Guidelines for The Undergraduate Project, the project aims to ‘provide students with an opportunity (a) to obtain practical experience in defining a research problem in the field, and designing and conducting the research project accordingly; (b) to demonstrate specialization-specific as well as general skills of vocational merit that enhances future employability prospects; and (c) to develop skills in teamwork and leadership ...’. The Panel notes that the Undergraduate Project Course (ITMA499) is mapped against all the BSMIS PILOs.
- The Undergraduate Project Guidelines document defines in detail the roles of the Chairperson of the Department, CAQA, administrators, supervisors, internal examiners, and students. The document is made available on the university’s website. The Chairperson is responsible for appointing an examination committee (two internal examiners and a supervisor) and approving final grades. The supervisor (who must have at least 3 years of teaching experience at university level and must be active in research) is responsible for guiding the students in the project, monitoring their progress and being involved in the examination and evaluation. The College Office Administrator’s responsibilities is mainly based on organizing the student files into a Supervision of Undergraduate Project Summary Report. This report then goes to the CAQA which monitors and evaluates the implementation of the established procedures. In the interviews, the Panel noted the awareness of the procedures by faculty and students.
- The evaluation is based on a written report (70%), and an oral presentation (30%). The final grade is then the average grade of the three members of the examination committee and is based on clearly defined rubrics for the oral and written parts. If the three members are diverging in their grades by more than 20%, the Chairperson of the Department is then responsible for moderating the final grade. According to the SER, some projects have been published in international journals, and evidence was supplied of one report that was published in the proceedings of the European Conference on e-Learning.
- The monitoring and review of the students’ progress is executed by the supervisors and documented in the ADREG system. The Chairperson of the Department monitors the supervision process. The CAQA also monitors and evaluates compliance with all the documentation requirements. Furthermore, the TLAC is periodically reviewing the undergraduate project guidelines. The last changes from version 4 to version 5 of the guidelines in 2021 was based on feedback from faculty, Chairpersons and Deans, and was focussed on improving the CILOs evaluation process and updating the related forms.

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

- The Panel notes that the level of students' achievements is generally appropriate and comparable to equivalent programmes. This is based on reviewing the students' assessed work, from course assignments to final projects and interviews with the students, faculty, and stakeholders such as external examiners. The Panel also notes that the capstone projects provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their ability to create and innovate. However, the technical aspects (e.g. data science analytics) need greater emphasis before assigning the internship, as clarified earlier in Indicator 3.4.
- Over the past five years, the number of admitted students has ranged from nine to 17. Graduation numbers for the most recent cohorts are 19 in 2018-2019, 21 in 2019-2020 and 11 expected to graduate in 2020-2021. The Panel notes that the majority of students do not complete their studies within four years. The Panel recommends that the College should investigate the reason for the relatively low year-on-year progression rates.
- AU collects data and maintains records on the destination of its graduates *via* the Directorate of Professional Relations, as clarified in virtual interviews. According to the SER an analysis of the data for the year 2018-2019 showed that 84% of graduates had 'appropriate employment in the area of Management Information Systems and 16% worked in relevant areas related to Business'.
- The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) conducts employer and alumni surveys. The results of the employer surveys indicate a satisfaction score of 88.38% with BSMIS graduates. During interviews, graduates also expressed satisfaction with the programme. The Panel concludes that the achievements of the graduates, as expressed in their assessed work and first destinations, are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes regionally and internationally.

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*

- The quality assurance management is a strategic priority and is part of the overall objectives of the University. The Ahlia University Quality Management System (AUQMS) is specified in the Quality Manual and is supported by additional policies and procedures. The current manual is in its fourth version and reflects a continuous improvement and adaptation process based on internal and external feedback. The Ahlia Centre for Information and Documentation (ACID) is responsible for the storage and distribution of all documentation related to quality management. The communication with relevant stakeholders is assured through the Staff Handbook, the Student Handbook, the website, SharePoint and events like special workshops such as induction day for the staff or orientation days for students. The conducted virtual interviews confirmed staff awareness of their specific quality assurance allocated tasks.
- The AUQMS framework is institutionalized and adopted at the university, college and department levels. The ownership of the system is located at the CAQA, which coordinates all quality assurance activities, documenting and disseminating them. In these activities, CAQA works closely together with the TLAC and the AQAC. The AQAC is chaired by the President of the University and the College Deans are its members. The TLAC is chaired by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and includes the College Deans and faculty representatives. The Deans are responsible for the AUQMS implementation at the college level and give support to the staff and students and interacts with the different committees. The Department and College Councils ensure the consistent implementation of policies and procedures, where for instance, the programme review, and end of semester reports are reviewed.
- The overall compliance with the AUQMS guidelines is ensured by the CAQA, in coordination with AQAC and TLAC. The Department Council is responsible for implementing AUQMS within the Department and is required to prepare a report each

semester on the application and status of quality assurance standards within the Department. According to the SER, the Department Council submits these reports to the College Council for consideration. These reports are also considered by the TLAC as well as the AQAC before being tabled at the university council meetings.

- During the interviews, the Panel noted that administrative and academic staff were aware of the AUQMS requirements and how their work was influenced by quality management considerations. The Panel was informed that part-time and newly appointed staff receive an induction by the Chairperson of the Department and are trained in the CAQA policy and procedures. The evidence provided indicates that regular workshops are held for faculty on quality assurance related matters, and events are held to provide the other stakeholders with recent updates. The collected feedback for such workshops indicates a positive satisfaction rate. The measured feedback for the end-of-semester report shows a general high satisfaction rate, although, with a low response rate of only five respondents from the College, and from them, two respondents are from the BSMIS Department. The Panel advises the College to investigate this issue.
- The AUQMS is monitored by CAQA in collaboration with AQAC and TLAC. To improve the monitoring and implementation processes, the processes are benchmarked with best practices. The role of the CME here is to take a lead in getting feedback from the multiple stakeholders by conducting surveys (current students, alumni, and employers). Several improvements have been noted such as aligning the AUQMS to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 pertaining to Quality Education.

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 organization of the College of Business and Finance is designed according to the subject disciplines and programmes offered within the College. It encompasses the Dean, the Director of the MBA programme, and the two Chairpersons for the Department of Accounting, Finance and Banking and the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems. The programme management is further supported by the Department Councils, which then report to the College Council.
- The Chairperson of the Department of Management, Marketing & Information Systems reports to the College Dean and is represented in the College Council. The Dean of the College of Business and Finance is represented in AQAC and TLAC. The roles and responsibilities of faculty, Chairpersons and Dean are defined in the Quality Assurance

Manual. It also includes the interrelation and responsibilities of the different committees. In addition, the University bylaws clearly define the responsibilities of the University Council, which is in charge for the Institution as a whole, while College Councils assume responsibility for college-wide matters and Department Councils are responsible for departmental-level matters. At the institutional level, TLAC is chaired by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and monitors and oversees academic matters in the University, while the AQAC is chaired by the President of the University and has oversight of administrative operations.

- The roles of the College Dean and Department Chairpersons are clearly stipulated in the University bylaws. Academic responsibilities and custodianship are relevant on all levels, with a special role for the Chairperson of the Departments. The Chairperson of the Department coordinates in terms of academic custodianship with the Department and College Councils and with entities like CAQA, CME and Student Affairs. The clear definition of roles and responsibilities and interrelations between the different entities ensure effective and responsible leadership at the programme level. There is as well a structure implemented to ensure the availability of adequate skills and expertise by providing specialized training workshops for academic and administrative staff. The documented meetings of College and Department Councils follow the prescribed reference in the bylaws of at least one meeting a month. The Panel appreciates the institution's leadership efforts in instilling a culture that encourages the maintaining of academic standards.

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 programme undergoes a quality assurance review at the end of each semester and a report is prepared. This procedure is a recent development, implemented for the first time in the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year and is primarily focused on the course level, resulting in minor changes such as revising the prescribed textbooks. There is also an annual review of the BSMIS programme conducted by the Department Council, the report of which is forwarded to the College Council for discussion, as well as to the TLAC. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the annual programme review covers the achievement of ILOs, assessment methods, allocated resources and course contents. An example for the actions taken based on the 2020-2021 annual review is the alignment of courses with professional certificates, and new teaching methods (like smart books for the Management Information Systems (ITMA 201) and System Analysis & Design (ITMA 411)

courses). The CAQA primarily manages the review monitoring and subsequent improvements developing out of it by coordinating with the TLAC. The Department Council agrees on the improvement actions, which are discussed and approved by the College Council and then monitored by CAQA.

- The periodic review for the programme is stated in the Revised Process for Developing, Reviewing, and Closing Academic Programmes. Periodic programme reviews are conducted every three years and may lead to major changes in the programmes. Any major changes that are proposed are reviewed by the AU Standing Curriculum Committee and thereafter tabled at a University Council meeting for final approval. The periodic reviews are based on a variety of feedback, from the external assessor/examiners as well as the external advisory board, student, alumni and employer satisfaction reports as well as the conducted benchmarking with other similar programmes. Based on the last periodic review recommendations in 2020-2021, the PILOs were revised to ensure their alignment with programme aims and two major and new elective courses, focussing on Artificial Intelligence Applications in Business, E-Government Concepts, and Business Analytics, were introduced. These courses include Business Cloud Computing (ITMA326) and Business Data Analytics (ITMA304) as core courses, and Artificial Intelligence Applications in Business (ITMA 418), E-Governments Concepts and Implementation (ITMA427), Business Intelligence (ITMA414) as elective courses.; and Entrepreneurship and Digital Innovation (ITMA310) as additional elective courses.

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

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

Judgment: Addressed

- AU has a Benchmarking Policy covering three types of benchmarking, namely comparative benchmarking against peer institutions, good practice benchmarking against regulatory requirements and professional standards, and internal benchmarking. A desktop analytical benchmarking of the BSMIS programme was conducted in November 2020 against similar programmes that are offered in local, regional and international universities. The benchmarking focused on the programme's design and curriculum structure. One of the main outcomes of the benchmarking that was conducted in 2020, was the recognition of the need to put more emphasis on the technical aspects in the BSMIS programme, which led to the revision of several courses such as the Introduction to Computers & Information Technology (ITCS101) and Introduction Programming Techniques (ITCS 22). Also, the benchmarking resulted in the introduction of new courses

such as Data Analytics and Cloud Computing (ITMA326) and Information Systems Auditing (ITMA423).

- The CME assumes responsibility for administering regular university and programme surveys amongst the university's internal and external stakeholders and collating the feedback. These surveys are administered amongst students, alumni, employers, and advisory board members, amongst others. The various surveys are collected and analyzed by the CME and then forwarded to the Advisory Board, Department Council and College Council to review and for decision making purposes.
- The stakeholders' feedback is discussed in the Department and College councils and is documented in the operational plan which serves as the mechanism to implement the recommended improvements. An example is the inclusion of more online-based exercises, intending to increase online-based assessments and online-based activities. The feedback results and outcomes are communicated in the classroom to students, through annual alumni gatherings, and through the advisory board meetings as clarified during interviews.
- The stakeholder surveys indicate a positive satisfaction rate for alumni, employers, students, and industry site supervisors. In the interviews with the above entities, it became clear that these stakeholders were informed about the consequences of their feedback and were satisfied with process and results.

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

- A College External Advisory Board has been constituted to provide guidance and support on issues related to the College and its programmes, including 'identifying academic programmes and promoting revision of current programmes'. Its members are drawn from employers, industrial and professional experts in the field, and alumni. Regular meetings are held, and this provides the opportunity for the members of the College External Advisory Board to comment on programme reviews and it is evident from the provided minutes of meetings. There is feedback from a member to increase the visibility of issues like cybersecurity amongst introducing new courses that are needed in the country, as clarified earlier. Their suggestions have been communicated to the Curriculum Committee for approval. The Panel appreciates the active involvement of Advisory Board Members in enhancing the programme and ensuring its relevance to the labour market.

- To meet labour market, national and societal needs, AU has developed a Policy for needs assessment and analysis. This policy describes the relevant activities for effective assessment and analysis of such needs and clarifies the role in developing the academic programmes. The process is initiated by constituting a Committee for Conducting Needs Assessment and Analysis (CCNAA). The most recent market needs assessment for BSMIS was based on 'desk' research with primary (current vacancy announcements on-line) and secondary source material, like data from the US, UAE and Saudi Arabia or Job data from Tamkeen and HEC for Bahrain (although not with more recent data). Obviously, the pandemic disruption adds a new element of uncertainty in future markets. The Panel recommends that the College should conduct a labour market needs study in relation to the new market developments and the current national and societal needs.
- From interviews, the Panel noted that the Department Council and College Council are responsible for ensuring that regular reviews are conducted and guide the development, review and closure of any academic programme, as clarified in the SER. Furthermore, surveys are systematically included in the AUQMS and used by the Department and College councils to enhance the development of the programme and align it with external stakeholders needs as clarified in interviews.

V. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the virtual interviews and documentation made available during the virtual 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 Management Information Systems 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 integrated planning framework from the programme to institutional level.
2. AU's arrangements to cater for women's needs which have led to being awarded by several entities.
3. The student support provided by Ahlia University academics and support staff.
4. The institution's leadership efforts in instilling a culture that encourages the maintaining of academic standards.
5. The active involvement of Advisory Board Members in enhancing the programme and ensure its relevance to market needs.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that Ahlia University and/or the College of Business and Finance should:

1. Focus on mastering at least one programme language in the BSMIS programme to ensure depth and ease when students are collaborating on projects.
2. Ensure that textbooks and references for all BSMIS courses are reviewed and updated and that course materials make more use of recent research findings and current professional practices.
3. Investigate the reasons for the low number of enrolled students in the BSMIS programme.
4. Revise the workload allocation by considering community engagement and other extra-curricular activities as part of it.
5. Introduce a register of minor incidents of students' academic misconduct.
6. Place/put 'Introduction to Data Analytics' course (ITCS431) as a core course instead of putting it as an elective course.
7. Investigate the reason for the relatively low year-on-year progression rates.

8. Conduct a labour market needs study in relation to the new market developments and the current national and societal needs.