



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**University of Bahrain
College of Business Administration
Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 15 – 18 May 2022

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Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AMBA	Association of MBAs
AoL	Assurance of Learning Report
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSBF	Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CoB	College of Business
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EQUIS	European Foundation for Management Development's Quality Improvement System
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
LAN	Local Area Network
LMS	Learning Management System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PEO	Programme Educational Objective
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center
QAAEC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Executive Committee
QAAO	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office
SER	Self-evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

UILO	University Intended Learning Outcome
UoB	University of Bahrain

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*	University of Bahrain
College/ Department*	College of Business Administration
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor in Banking and Finance
Qualification Approval Number	University Council Decision 1424/2013
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from the placement dates
Number of Units*	43
NQF Credit	512
Programme Aims*	<p>A. Demonstrate advanced competency in Banking and Finance issues and their interconnection with other core functional areas of Business.</p> <p>B. Understand Cultural Differences and the Globalization of Business.</p> <p>C. Use skills and tools to develop effective decisions in Banking and Finance.</p> <p>D. Communicate effectively in a variety of modalities.</p> <p>E. Employ collaborative team skills to accomplish a common goal and apply an effective leadership style.</p> <p>F. Perform tasks independently, professionally and ethically.</p>
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	<p>a1. Students will identify and apply banking and finance knowledge and concepts to business situations.</p> <p>a2. Students will understand the interconnections between finance and core functional areas of business.</p> <p>b1. Students will obtain knowledge about international business environments and cross-cultural differences.</p> <p>b2. Students will identify and analyze major international business environment factors in banking and finance.</p> <p>c1. Student will explain concepts used in making banking and finance decisions.</p> <p>c2. Student will use appropriate tools to make an effective decision.</p>

	<p>d1. Student will prepare written documents that are clear and concise, using appropriate style and presentation for the intended audience, purpose and context.</p> <p>d2. Students will prepare and deliver oral presentations that are clear, focused, well-structured, and delivered in a professional manner</p> <p>e1. Students will develop leadership skills necessary to perform effectively in a professional context.</p> <p>e2. Students will participate in experiential learning understand the benefits of working in teams composed of people from various educational, and work experience backgrounds.</p> <p>f1. Students will identify and assess ethical, environmental and/or sustainability considerations in banking and finance decision-making and practice.</p> <p>f2. Students will identify social and cultural implications of business situation.</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	Partially 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	Partially 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	Partially Addressed
Standard 4	Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfied
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	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 University of Bahrain (UoB) has Academic and Administrative Bylaws and Regulations for Offering and Developing Academic Programmes and Courses that ensure the quality of its academic programmes. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that these laws and regulations, in addition to UoB Quality Manual ensure that the offered programmes by the College of Business (CoB), which include the Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF), are fit for purpose and complies with the Higher Education Council (HEC) requirements. There is also evidence of stakeholders' input to the CoB programmes through the Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) and surveys. At departmental level, there is a Curriculum Committee that manages the curriculum and implements CoB's improvement plans. In general, the Panel is of the view that the College implements a clear planning framework for programme development and monitoring to ensure that the programme is relevant and fit for purpose.
- The Panel was provided with the Academic Risk Management Guide 2022, which ought to be utilised by CoB to mitigate risk related to the programme. The Department of Economics and Finance is responsible for the identification and mitigation of potential risks to the quality of the BSBF programme, where risks are classified into low, medium, and high. Based on a review of the evidence, the Panel notes that there are formal procedures in place to control/mitigate risks and review the related implementation and achievement of progress taken.
- The BSBF programme adheres to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and has been placed on NQF Level 8 as clarified in the Self-evaluation Report (SER). The Panel notes that mapping and confirmation processes are in place to ensure that the programme

complies with the NQF requirements. The Panel is of the view that the programme title is concise and consonant with the type and level of the qualification. The programme title is accurately documented on the sample of degree certificates that was provided to the Panel and is also clearly stated on the university's website.

- The programme specifications include a set of Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) that reflect the aims of the BSBF programme. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the aims are aligned with the University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs) and the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). As clarified in the SER, the PEOs are mapped to the mission of the CoB and the Strategic Goals of the UoB. The Panel was also informed that the programme aims are discussed with the external stakeholders through the PAC. The Panel is of the view that the BSBF programme has clear and appropriate aims that are revised based on stakeholders' feedback.

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*

- The Panel notes that graduate attributes are generic and embedded in the UILOs and PILOs. From the virtual interviews and provided evidence, the Panel learned that there are no specific graduate attributes for the BSBF programme. The Panel advises the College to develop specific graduate attributes for the BSBF programme that reflect the Banking and finance industry needs.
- The PILOs are clearly stated under the domain headings: knowledge & understanding, subject-specific skills, thinking skills, and general & transferable skills. The Panel notes that these are measurable and appropriate to the level of an undergraduate degree. The Panel examined the provided evidence and confirms that there is a clear mapping and alignment of PILOs to PEOs and of PILOs to UILOs. However, from the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that the PILOs and CILOs were not benchmarked with local, regional, and international universities. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should benchmark the PILOs and CILOs against similar programmes at the local, regional and international levels.
- The Panel notes that the CILOs are mapped to the PILOs and linked to the topics covered in the courses and assessment methods presented in course specifications. A submitted sample of course specifications has shown that the teaching and assessment methods are

also mapped to the CILOs. The Panel acknowledges that the CILOs are clearly written, measurable, and adhere to international norms.

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 study plan of the BSBF programme is well-organized and shows year-on-year and course-by-course progression indicating the course types, the pre-requisite courses, credits value, and total required credits. Student progression in terms of passing credit hours to be qualified for 2nd-4th year status are also mentioned. The Panel notes that the programme provides a graduation research project to develop students research skills. From interviews, the Panel was informed that the graduation research project course (FIN498) was introduced in the new curriculum 2020-2021. However, from provided evidence and virtual interviews, the Panel learned that the programme does not provide a compulsory or elective course to develop students' research skills. The Panel also notes curriculum benchmarking was not conducted. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should benchmark the curriculum against similar local, regional and international programmes and consider incorporating a prerequisite course about research methods prior to students undertaking the graduation project.
- The Panel reviewed the course e-portfolios including syllabi, teaching materials, and a sample of student works and noted that the courses are generally appropriate in terms of knowledge and skills and breadth and depth. The Panel also noted that there is a suitable coverage of topics expected in the course contents. However, the Panel is of the view that additional topics on more recent types of investments that are related to fintech should be embedded in the Financial Markets & Institutions (FIN221) course. Moreover, the Financial Markets & Institutions course should include discussions on more recent types of investments that are related to fintech and the Islamic Financial Institutions (BANK411) course should include more case studies. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should embed more recent types of investments that are related to fintech in the Financial Markets & Institutions (FIN221) course; and include more case studies in the Islamic Financial Institutions (BANK 411) course.
- The Panel notes that the textbooks, references and course materials are current. It was noted that the selected textbooks and references go through a specific process to ensure their appropriateness before the offering of the courses every semester. The Panel also noticed that many of the textbooks and references include the commonly used material

for a banking and finance programme offered at the bachelor level. The Panel encourages the programme team to further enhance research teaching linkages and the use of recent research findings in course materials and teaching and learning activities.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

Judgment: Addressed

- UoB has a Teaching and Learning Policy at the institutional level, which encourages the use of technology and innovative teaching and learning strategies at the programme level. The Panel notes that there is a range of appropriate teaching and learning methods that are being utilized to deliver the BSBF programme. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that flipping classrooms along with practical activities are utilized to ensure the attainment of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). Interviewed students and alumni were satisfied with the teaching and learning methods used in the programme.
- UoB has an E-learning Centre that supports and monitors e-learning activities through the Blackboard. The Panel was provided with a demo session on the e-learning system which was highly expanded and supported by UoB during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the Panel notes that UoB Teaching and Learning Policy does not refer explicitly to e-learning. The Panel also notes that the programme specifications document gives an indication of the teaching and learning methodology that is used for the programme; yet more comprehensive detail ought to be added. Therefore, the Panel recommends that UoB should review the Teaching and Learning Policy to include more information about the uses of e-learning. The Panel also advises the Department to include all the utilized teaching and learning methods in the programme specifications document.
- The UoB Teaching and Learning Policy encourages student's participation in learning and recognizes the importance of balancing theory and practice. The Panel notes that appropriate skills are integrated within the programme for encouraging lifelong learning, such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, research and Information Technology (IT) skills. This, in addition to the extracurricular activities, which include field trips/visits to local companies, workshops and webinars that are organized by the CoB's Business Society and the College, expose students to professional practices. However, during the virtual interviews with external stakeholders, the Panel learned that students' exposure to soft-skills, IT-technical skills, and practical skills need to be further enhanced. The Panel is also of the view that a research method course should be introduced to further support the BSBF students in their graduation project and to enhance their research skills (see the recommendations under Indicator 1.3.).

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

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

Judgment: Addressed

- UoB has an institutional assessment framework which includes the Regulations of Study and Examination and the Moderation of Assessment Regulation. These documents are available on the university's website and Blackboard. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the University has developed a document entitled 'Quality Assurance Guidelines for Precautionary Period' to ensure the proper implementation of the regulations related to assessments during the pandemic. The Panel notes that the Student Handbook and the programme specifications include some details and general guidelines on assessments. The Panel is of the view that the assessment regulations are well-disseminated to relevant stakeholders.
- The Panel notes that instructors use both summative and formative assessment methods to evaluate student performance and achievement of the courses as per the provided evidence. From interviews, the Panel finds that 60% of assessments include coursework, tests, presentations, and midterm examinations, while 40% of assessments is allocated to final examinations. The Panel was also informed by the students that timely and prompt feedback is provided to students within two weeks from the date of assessment activity.
- The evaluation of ethics and principles of scientific research were not covered in the SER. The Panel notes that consideration of ethics and principles of research is embedded in the Research Policy and in the Plagiarism Policy. Furthermore, SafeAssign and Turnitin are used by faculty and students to detect plagiarism. However, from the submitted course specifications, the Panel learned that neither ethics nor principles of research were covered in the courses. This was confirmed during interviews. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should embed topics on research ethics within the BSBF courses.
- The Moderation of Assessment Regulation and the Regulations of Study and Examination outline the mechanisms used to ensure that students' achievements are graded with fairness and rigour. The Panel notes that there are appropriate marking rubrics and guidelines for the course assessments. There are also appropriate provisions for addressing academic misconduct and appeals by the students. Interviewed students confirmed that they are aware and fully understand the academic misconduct regulations and appeal processes.

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

- The admission requirements of the programme are available on the university's website and in the Programme Handbook; and it was noted that these requirements ensure gender equality. The Panel also notes that the majority of admitted students into the programme are female students; and students with special needs are admitted into the programme and provided with adequate support. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that there are general requirements as well as programme-specific requirements. The admission to the BSBF programme requires a minimum score of 70% in high school.
- The UoB has an orientation programme focused on developing English language skills, in addition to IT and basic mathematical competencies. The Panel learned that students with 90% overall score in English courses in high school, or who pass the General Aptitude Test, or obtain a score of 500 in TOEFL or 5.5 in IELTS are exempted from the orientation programme. The Panel is satisfied with the remedial support provided to students.
- The Panel notes that UoB specifies the requirements for recognition of credits obtained at other universities and from another programme within UoB. The process is administered by the Deanship of Admissions and Registration. The Panel is of a view that these admission requirements are adequate and appropriate for the BSBF programme. However, the Panel did not find any revision or feedback related to the admission criteria in accordance with national and international practices. From the submitted minutes of meeting and virtual interviews, the Panel found that the admission policy and requirements were not discussed. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should regularly revise the admission policy in light of student performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders and benchmark its requirements with other local, regional, and international universities.

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

- Procedures on faculty recruitment, appointment, appraisal and promotion are elaborated in the Faculty Guide. The Panel was provided with a list of promoted staff during the last five years and a sample of faculty filled appraisal forms. Furthermore, evidence was provided to show that new part-time and full-time faculty attended induction sessions at the university, college, and department levels. Virtual interviews with academic staff corroborated that these procedures are in place with consistent and transparent implementation; and confirmed their satisfaction with the induction procedures.
- UoB has a Research Policy, Ethical Research Guidelines, and a Research Plan 2019-2022. The Research Plan identifies seven initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of scientific research at the University. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the College has put an emphasis on research in sustainable Islamic business & finance and research in business analytics & responsible management. The Panel notes that the number of scientific publications has increased in the past few years. The Panel also notes with appreciation the college's initiative to establish an International Center for Research in Sustainable Islamic Business and Finance to be one of the leading research centers of Islamic finance in the world.
- As per UoB Academic and Administrative Bylaws, the total working hours for academic staff per week is 40 hours, of which 12 credit hours for PhD holders, or 15 credit hours for master's degree holders. The submitted evidence of the teaching load for the last three years is aligned with the University's Teaching Load Policy. From the virtual interviews and submitted evidence, the Panel learned that the academic staff in the Department actively engage in scientific research and community engagement activities. A consideration into special needs of women is also in place, where women are given maternity leave.
- The SER states that there are 25 full-time faculty members in the Department of Economics and Finance for the academic year 2021-2022. There are two Professors, three Associate Professors, 15 Assistant Professors, and five teaching assistants in the Department. From the submitted CVs, the Panel acknowledges that faculty members are suitably qualified and fit for purpose to teach on the BSBF programme. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the faculty to student ratio is 1:40 and there is a plan to recruit more faculty members in the future. The Panel advises the College to expedite the

implementation of the recruitment plan as the current academic staff members are involved in teaching other programmes at CoB.

- From the SER and during virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that academic staff were provided with professional development activities organized by the Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership and evidence on conducting workshops and seminars was also provided to the Panel. However, the Panel was not provided with sufficient evidence on monitoring and evaluation of the professional development activities. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should monitor and evaluate the conducted professional development activities to ensure their effectiveness and relevance to the needs of the BSBF staff members.
- From the virtual interviews and provided evidence, the Panel learned that the staff turnover at the Department of Economics & Finance was relatively stable ranging from 7% to 10% in the last five academic years (2017-2022). During the virtual interviews with faculty, the Panel was informed that incentives such as research grants and funding for attending conferences are provided to them, which helps in encouraging retention of academic staff.

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

- UoB main campus in Sakhir is adequate and meets the needs of faculty and students. From the provided virtual tour, the facilities available to the College include classrooms, computer laboratories, staff offices and multipurpose halls. The Panel notes that the available classrooms and computer laboratories are appropriately equipped and suitable for the needs of the programme. The Panel also notes that the College has adequate IT facilities and infrastructure that cater for students' needs. Furthermore, the College uses the Learning Management System (LMS) Blackboard and Microsoft Teams for e-learning, in addition to making use of the Student Information System (SIS), which are provided by UoB. During the virtual interviews, the Panel confirmed that the students and faculty are satisfied with the IT services which include the provision of free Wi-Fi for all students and staff, Local Area Network (LAN) to classroom, and computer laboratories.
- The SER describes a wide range of library-related physical and online resources. From the virtual tour of the UoB Central Library, the Panel found that the library has adequate study spaces and resources including electronic resources and databases such as Thomson

Reuters database, for research utilization purposes. During virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the library provides e-books to support students, and e-resources' requests have increased during the covid-19 pandemic. The Panel concludes that the library facilities and services are adequate and appropriate.

- The University has a Health and Safety Policy and there is an Occupational Health and Safety Committee which is responsible for setting the guidelines for laboratory health and safety. The Panel was informed during the virtual interviews with UoB administrative staff that the Facilities Management Office and Facilities Maintenance Unit of UoB are responsible for the maintenance of the university's facilities and resources. The college technicians also help in maintaining the IT facilities that serve the programme, and some vendors are responsible for the maintenance of equipment on warranty.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

There are functioning management information and tracking systems that support the decision-making processes and evaluate the utilisation of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, along with policies and procedures that ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results.

Judgment: Addressed

- UoB has a centralized SIS to manage and monitor information related to the academic programmes and students, including students' personal and academic data, registered courses, attendance, study plans, transcripts, and at-risk students. This SIS is accessible online *via* a password-protected website. The data provided in the SIS reports is utilized by various stakeholders, such as Deans, Head of Departments (HoDs) and Quality Assurance Directors. Virtual interviews with senior management and administrative staff confirmed that the reports generated from the SIS are adequate for their needs and help in the decision-making processes.
- During the virtual interviews with administrative staff, the Panel was informed that detailed tracking records are available, and reports are generated related to the usage of laboratories, library, e-learning, and e-resources. The E-Learning Center is responsible for tracking the use of Blackboard and relevant reports are provided for academic departments upon request. The library also generates separate statistics for usage of digital resources. The Panel is of the view that the tracking system is adequate for informing the Department's decision-making process.
- UoB has cyber policies and procedures to ensure the security of learners' records, which are managed by the IT Center. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that there is a server backup and restore procedure to protect against loss of learners' records. The learner records are password-protected and are strictly limited to authorized parties,

with back-ups done on a weekly and monthly basis. These back-ups are stored on-campus as well as off-campus in another remote site.

- The awarded certificates and transcripts are issued *via* the SIS system. Certificates are verified by the Dean of Admission and Registration and approved by the President. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that graduation requirements are first checked by the Department and forwarded to the Registrar where the certificates are issued. The Panel was also informed that the students can submit their requests online to have their certificates issued, which usually takes one to three days.

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 Guidance & Counselling Department of the Deanship of Students' Affairs provides students with support relevant to academic and study skills. The IT support/helpdesk provides the needed technical assistance in relation to IT resources and information. Interviewed administrative staff confirmed that suitable support is available for students including library induction, computer laboratories assistance, and healthcare support, which is provided by the Healthcare Clinic. The Career Counseling Office provides career guidance to the students and organizes the annual career day and various workshops on how to prepare a CV, succeed in job interviews, work ethics, and how to establish knowledge networks that will prepare the students for their career paths. Interviews with students and alumni confirmed that career days took place and are sufficient to support them in planning for their career journeys.
- The UoB Guidance & Counselling Department conducts an induction day each academic year for newly admitted and transferred students, which was confirmed by the students during the virtual interviews. During this event, the students are introduced to the atmosphere of the University, rules, regulations, and how to adapt to university life. Moreover, all students are assigned an academic advisor, as per the Academic Advising Regulations. The submitted samples of advising forms show that advising activities are in place. During the virtual interviews with academic staff and students, the Panel learned that an Online Academic Clinic was introduced during the pandemic through which students could inquire about all academic related matters, programmes, study plans, and academic advising. The Panel notes that the students were appreciative of the guidance and advice that they received from their academic advisors. The Panel appreciates the academic advising support provided to students through the Online Academic Clinic.

- UoB has a policy for supporting students with special needs. Students with certain physical disabilities are considered for admission and supported by the assigned Academic Advisor. The Panel learned that the Academic Advisor coordinates with the Guidance and Counseling Department to ensure that full support is provided for students with special needs. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that various services and facilities are provided for such students, including specialized transportation for disabled students and coordination with volunteers to support them whenever needed. In addition, there is an Equal Opportunities Committee, which is tasked with maintaining equality between males and females across the University.
- The advising system monitors the at-risk students whose Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) is less than 2.0. The at-risk students are required to meet their Academic Advisors to help them by giving appropriate advice. During the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that academic advising is given to assist at-risk students when registering their courses. The conducted virtual interviews with students confirmed that counselling and learning support were in place to help at-risk students. Submitted samples of the student survey show a high student satisfaction rate of more than 80% with regard to teaching, support, and resources from academic year 2019 to 2021. Overall, the Panel is satisfied with the support services provided to students.

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 Panel notes that both formative and summative assessment methods are utilised. The assessment tools include written examinations, oral presentations, debates, projects, assignments, reflective practice assignments, case studies, creative works, and presentations. During the pandemic, the Department allocated 30% of the overall student grade to small group engagement assessments during lectures and tutorials. Furthermore, some written examinations were replaced with projects, quizzes and case studies. The SER and assessed student work samples confirm that assessments are reliable and satisfy standards of rigour and complexity for a bachelor level qualification.
- On the alignment of the assessments used for the programme with learning outcomes and graduate attributes, the Panel noted that appropriate mechanisms are found to be in place. It was noted that in each course specification each assessment is linked to the CILOs. These CILOs are then linked to the PILOs, PEOs and UILOs. The collective achievement of the CILOs, through students' successful accomplishment of course assessments mapped to them, ensures the attainment of the PILOs, PEOs and UILOs aligned to them. This process is described in detail in the provided evidence.
- From the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that there is a process to ensure consistency, level adequacy, and quality of assessments by reviewing course portfolios submitted by the faculty. This is shown in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy included among the evidence. Each course portfolio contains: the course outline; assessment questions and model answers; assessed student work samples; and pre and post moderation forms. These along with the course assessment forms which include the assessment results of the CILOs and the related improvement actions are reviewed by the department's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee who in turn compiles the CILOs' assessment results to produce the Assurance of Learning Report (AoL) which guides and shapes the overall Programme Enhancement Plan.

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

- UoB has clear policies and procedures related to academic integrity applicable to both faculty and students. Procedures related to student academic integrity in terms of types of misconduct cases, consequences, penalties along with Anti-Plagiarism Policy are shown in detail in the provided evidence. Moreover, the Panel was provided with the materials related to academic integrity that was distributed to students. The Panel reviewed the above-mentioned supporting materials and observed the existence of policies addressing absenteeism, cheating, dismissal and student appeals. Information related to key academic policies, academic integrity, ethics, plagiarism is disseminated either through print-based material, or more recently due to the pandemic, posted online in the LMS.
- The Panel notes the existence of sound processes that are implemented to deter and detect plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct. Examples of the usage of Safe Assign and Turnitin were provided to the Panel. Other tools that have been used especially during the pandemic include Lockdown Browser, which is an electronic proctoring platform, and Respondus, which is used to combat and deter cheating during online quizzes, tests, and examinations. Furthermore, at the beginning of the semester, academic staff inform students about the accepted level of similarity when using the authenticity detection services. Faculty also participate annually in a one-day long workshop to introduce them to the techniques of preventing student plagiarism. However, during the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that the SafeAssign feature on the Blackboard is mainly used to provide students with feedback on the percentage of matching contents between their submitted work and other sources. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should set a maximum level of similarity percentage and the number of allowed submissions permitted through the plagiarism detection software (Safe Assign or similar).
- The Panel confirms that academic misconduct of any type is recorded and responded to, based on the provided evidence. Cases of misconduct and plagiarism or other forms of cheating are referred to the Academic Misconduct Committee. Conducted interviews verified the implementation of a system of first warning, second warning, and then dismissal. The Panel reviewed samples of students' academic misconduct cases and found that the followed process is well-recorded and the actions taken are in line with UoB regulations.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.

Judgment: *Partially Addressed*

- The Panel notes that UoB has an Internal Moderation Policy that is implemented according to a course rolling plan and guided by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy. Internal moderation is conducted *via* (i) the Exam and Grade Moderation Committee and (ii) the multiple stages that internal pre-moderation and internal post-moderation go through. Internal moderators are specialized faculty members who are familiar with the course contents.
- Samples of internal moderation forms were examined by the Panel. The Panel notes that internal moderators follow specific, consistent comprehensive criteria to review assessments to ensure, clarity, appropriateness, fairness, accuracy, and alignment with CILOs and specified topics. The moderation forms are included in the course portfolios, which are reviewed by the department's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee to ensure the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation and that the suggested changes have been implemented. However, the Panel notes that in almost all cases, the 'right' yes/no box is checked, without any sufficient comments or explanations. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to ensure that the internal moderators write detailed comments and explanations. The Panel also notes that the external moderation was not conducted. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the CoB should expedite the implementation of the external moderation as per UoB's External Moderation Policy.

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*

- As per the SER, the programme includes a practical training course, which is mandatory for students upon the successful completion of a minimum of 107 credit hours of the programme. Eligible students who enroll in this course are not expected to take any other courses with the training. From the virtual interviews and evidence, the Panel learned that the CoB redesigned the internship component of the programme to incorporate a graduation project, so as to enhance the practical aspects and develop students' research skills by asking them to work on an applied research project during their internship. This

redesigning of the internship component has led to the introduction of the three-credit Internship and Graduation Project course (FIN498) in the 2020-2021 Study Plan.

- As per the SER and provided evidence, there are clear policies, procedures and guidelines in place to ensure an equivalent experience amongst all students. Interviews with the programme team clarified the role of each party and confirmed that the roles and responsibilities of all the internship stakeholders are clearly communicated to them. The Panel notes that the ILOs of the Internship and Graduation Project (FIN498) course are clear and contribute to the achievement of the PILOs. The Panel also notes that there are arrangements in place to evaluate the achievement of the CILOs and the effectiveness of the work-based learning. However, the Panel was unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the FIN498 course assessments as it had not yet been offered in the programme at the time of the review.

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.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- As discussed earlier under Indicator 3.4, one of requirements of the programme is the completion of a three credit hours course entitled Internship and Graduation Project (FIN498) as per the Programme's study Plan 2020-2021. There are clear guidelines that define the roles and responsibilities of the supervisors and students. From the virtual interviews, the Panel learned that students are required to choose the topic of their graduation project from an approved list of projects that match the selected place of internship. The Panel also learned that one faculty supervisor supervises both components of the work-based learning (training and graduation project). Based on the complexity of supervision and volume of work in this course, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the Internship and Graduation Project course structure, either by separating it into two courses or by increasing the number of credit hours allocated for the course. The Panel also recommends that the College should ensure that its students are adequately prepared in terms of academic writing, and research methodology skills for their graduation research project (for more details see Indicator 1.5).
- As discussed earlier under Indicator 3.4, there are arrangements in place to evaluate the graduation project and the achievement of the CILOs. However, the Panel was unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the FIN498 course assessments as it had not yet been offered in the programme at the time of the review.

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

The achievements of the graduates are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes as expressed in their assessed work, rates of progression and first destinations.

Judgment: Partially Addressed

- The Panel notes that students' achievement level is appropriate based on the assessed work provided in the submitted evidence. Furthermore, the Panel verified through the virtual interviews with different stakeholders that the level of student achievement is appropriate for a bachelor in Banking and Finance.
- The Panel notes that the SER does not include an analysis of the provided statistical information in relation to the number of students admitted to the programme in the last five years which has increased from 115 in 2017-2018 to 170 in 2018-2019 and from 166 in 2019-2020 to 200 in 2021-2022. The provided evidence also shows that the number of graduates has decreased from 200 in 2017-2018 to 179 in 2018-2019 and increased from 159 in 2019-2020 to 221 in 2020-2021. The provided evidence also shows that a large number of students - ranging from 60 students in 2017-2018 to 94 students in 2020-2021 - graduated in about 5 to 7 years. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct the analysis of the student's progression in the BSBF programme at the cohort level and examine the reasons behind the high length of the study period.
- The SER does not include statistical information about the percentage of graduates who proceeded to appropriate/relevant employment or have undertaken postgraduate studies at the programme level. The Panel was provided with a report on graduate destination data produced by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) in December 2021. This report relies on a survey that captures information on the destination of graduates, in which a total of 263 graduates from the College as a whole including only 61 graduates from the BSBF participated in the survey. The Panel recommends the College should gather student progression and graduate destination data at the programme level to ensure that academic standards are met.
- From interviews, the Panel learned that employer survey is administered every two years whereas graduates are being surveyed two years after their graduation. The Panel was provided with a sample of employer survey which was conducted for all the undergraduate programmes offered by the CoB including this programme. With respect to alumni survey, the Panel was provided with samples of the conducted surveys in 2017 and 2021; however, it was noted that these surveys are administered for all CoB programmes and not only for this programme. A recommendation on surveys has been given in Standard 4 (Indicator 4.4). From the virtual interviews, although it was noted that employers along with PAC members were generally satisfied with students' knowledge,

they stressed that BSBF graduates lack the knowledge about topics related fintech, block chain and digitalization (see the recommendation under Indicator 1.3).

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 University has a set of appropriate regulations and policies that cater for the needs of its academic programmes. All the policies and procedures related to Quality Assurance (QA) are available on the SIS and defined in several documents, such as the Quality Manual and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that QA policies and procedures are well-communicated to the relevant stakeholders and are reviewed every five years and when needed.
- The Quality Manual outlines the key responsibilities of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC), and the QAAO. There is a QA hierarchy from the university level through the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Executive Committee (QAAEC), which oversees the QA offices and committees. The QAAEC is assisted by several committees as per the provided evidence. These various internal entities have joint responsibility for the variety of interventions including QA and accreditation activities, reviews of course portfolios, and assessment/evaluation of relevant surveys.
- The consistent implementation of QA policies and processes is ensured through the QAAO on the college level, along with departmental quality assurance committees, which are jointly responsible for managing and implementing the QA and accreditation activities and improvement plans. The QAAO identifies the capacity building workshops depending on the needs of the College and its departments. Evidence was provided on conducting workshops on different topics such as preparation for AACSB accreditation, and how to use the new QA system. It was noted during the virtual interviews that although staff have an understanding about the QA processes; some of the faculty members were still unaware and unclear about the difference between annual and periodic reviews. Therefore, the Panel advises the CoB to provide more trainings/workshops to staff on the differences and requirements of annual and periodic reviews.

- The Panel notes that the QA management system at the university, college and department levels is responsive to the needs of current circumstances specifically during the COVID-19 pandemic and the transition to online learning. It was confirmed during the virtual interviews that QA practices are monitored and evaluated by the QAAC to identify areas for improvement which are incorporated in the QA operational plans. Furthermore, the Panel notes with appreciation that the College has been active in external accreditation such as AACSB in 2016 and 2021. In addition, the College is in the process of securing accreditations *via* the European Foundation for Management Development's Quality Improvement System (EQUIS) and the Association of MBAs (AMBA).

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 College is managed by the Dean who oversees the departments within the College. The programme is co-managed by the Programme Coordinator and the HoD. They are on the Department Council and liaise with course coordinators. Faculty members in the Department are involved in decision-making through the departmental committees. Staff interviewed during the virtual visit were clearly aware of the reporting lines and channels of communications. From the virtual interviews, the Panel was able to confirm that the current structure ensures appropriate management of the programme. The Panel notes that the committees' terms of reference clearly state the roles and responsibilities of all committees. Moreover, evidence was provided on how committees fit into CoB's organizational chart, which the Panel finds appropriate for the management of the programme.
- The Department of Economics and Finance is the custodian of the programme's academic standards. The responsibility of the academic standards is handled by the Programme Coordinator; whereas any administrative or managerial matters are handled by the HoD who reports to the Dean. The conducted virtual interviews confirmed a functional programme management system where staff in general understand their roles and responsibilities and how they fit in it. Overall, the Panel is satisfied with the current arrangements.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

There are arrangements for annual internal evaluation and periodic reviews of the programme that incorporate both internal and external feedback and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.

Judgment: *Partially Addressed*

- According to the SER, the programmes and courses offered by CoB are regularly reviewed and updated. The SER indicates that internal evaluation of the programmes is done on an annual basis. However, from submitted evidence, the Panel noted that the last annual reviews of CoB programmes were conducted in the academic year 2017-2018. Furthermore, from the submitted evidence and interviews, the Panel found that the mechanism for monitoring the implementation of annual review recommendations is not in place. During the virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the College was exempted from conducting the annual programme reviews in order to focus on the AACSB accreditation. Nonetheless, the Panel recommends that the College should regularly conduct the annual programme review; and establish appropriate mechanisms to implement and monitor improvements based on it.
- During interviews, the Panel was informed that the College has a policy of reviewing its programmes every five years in line with AACSB requirements. The SER outlines the continuous programme reviews and enhancement process where the inputs are taken from PAC, alumni, and student surveys. However, the Panel did not find sufficient evidence on the implementation of the feedback received from stakeholders and the mechanisms used to monitor the effectiveness of this process. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct comprehensive periodic reviews of the programme that include feedback from internal and external stakeholders to ensure improvement in all its components; and introduce mechanisms through which the proper implementation of these reviews and their resulting improvement plans is ensured.

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*

- According to the SER, the College conducts comparative desktop benchmarking exercise with leading academic institutions regionally and internationally. Virtual interviews with academic staff confirmed that the universities involved in benchmarking should be within the same profile and AACSB accredited. However, the Panel notes that the conducted benchmarking deals only with course content similarity. The Panel is of the view that this is a very narrow benchmarking and focuses purely on individual course content similarity *per se* rather than broader, more generic areas requiring benchmarking such as teaching and assessment philosophies, PILOs, CILOs and physical resources. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should widen the scope of its benchmarking process to

incorporate more areas such as teaching and assessment philosophies, CILOs and PILOs and physical resources; and utilize the results of benchmarking to enhance the delivery of the programme.

- During virtual interviews, the Panel was informed that the QAAC is tasked with obtaining feedback from employers and alumni *via* surveys. Other surveys are handled by the QA Office at the College level. The provided employer and alumni surveys were conducted for all the programmes offered by CoB. Based on this, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the existing institutional surveys are adapted to collect programme-specific data and implemented to obtain regular feedback from stakeholders for improving the programme. From the virtual interviews, although it was noted that employers along with PAC members were generally satisfied with students' knowledge; they stressed that BSBF graduates lack certain skills. This was also echoed by interviewed alumni. Recommendation on this matter was given earlier in Indicator 1.3.

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 members of the College's PAC are subject experts in different business fields. The Panel notes that some members have experience of involvement in a number of external financial organisations in the region. Examples include: the Shari'a Boards of Islamic Banks; membership of the Board of Trustees of the Waqf Fund (at the Central Bank of Bahrain). The Panel also notes that the feedback from the PAC is gathered through discussions during the annual PAC meeting. Feedback and recommendations are discussed at the QA Committee at the department level. Examples of issues raised include enhancing students' communitive skills, creativity and encouraging collaborative projects with banks. Interviewed academic staff confirmed that suggestions from the PAC are usually being considered to be incorporated in the programme.
- During interviews, the Panel learned that the Department relies on PAC meetings to ensure that the programme is aligned with the labour market, national, and societal needs. In addition, the College also relies on employer and alumni surveys along with graduate destination reports and training evaluation surveys. However as mentioned earlier in this Report, the alumni and employer surveys are not exclusive for the BSBF and are conducted for all the programmes offered by CoB. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct regular labour market needs studies for the BSBF programme to ensure that it is relevant and up-to-date.

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 of Science in Banking and Finance offered by the College of Business Administration of the University of Bahrain.

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

1. The college's initiative to establish an International Center for Research in Sustainable Islamic Business and Finance to be one of the leading research centers of Islamic finance in the world.
2. The academic advising support provided to students through the Online Academic Clinic.
3. The external accreditation of the College *via* the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business and its initiative to secure accreditations *via* the European Foundation for Management Development's Quality Improvement System and the Association of MBAs.

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

1. Benchmark the programme intended learning outcomes and the course intended learning outcomes against similar programmes at the local, regional and international levels.
2. benchmark the curriculum against similar local, regional and international programmes and consider incorporating a prerequisite course about research methods prior to students undertaking the graduation project.
3. Embed more recent types of investments that are related to fintech in the Financial Markets & Institutions course; and include more case studies in the Islamic Financial Institutions course.
4. Review the Teaching and Learning Policy to include more information about the uses of e-learning.
5. Embed topics on research ethics within the Bachelor in Banking and Finance courses.

6. Regularly revise the admission policy in light of student performance and feedback from relevant stakeholders and benchmark its requirements with other local, regional, and international universities.
7. Monitor and evaluate the conducted professional development activities to ensure their effectiveness and relevance to the needs of the Bachelor in Banking and Finance staff.
8. Set a maximum level of similarity percentage and the number of allowed submissions permitted through the plagiarism detection software (Safe Assign or similar).
9. Expedite the implementation of the external moderation as per University of Bahrain External Moderation Policy.
10. Revise the Internship and Graduation Project course structure, either by separating it into two courses or by increasing the number of credit hours allocated for the course.
11. Ensure that students are adequately prepared in terms of academic writing, and research methodology skills for their graduation research project.
12. Conduct the analysis of the student's progression in the BSBF programme at the cohort level and examine the reasons behind the high length of the study period.
13. Gather student progression and graduate destination data at the programme level to ensure that academic standards are met.
14. Regularly conduct the annual programme review; and establish appropriate mechanisms to implement and monitor improvements based on it.
15. Conduct comprehensive periodic reviews of the programme that include feedback from internal and external stakeholders to ensure improvement in all its components; and introduce mechanisms through which the proper implementation of these reviews and their resulting improvement plans is ensured.
16. Widen the scope of the benchmarking process to incorporate more areas such as teaching and assessment philosophies, programme intended learning outcomes, course intended learning outcomes, and physical resources; and utilize the results of benchmarking to enhance the delivery of the programme.
17. Ensure that the existing institutional surveys are adapted to collect programme-specific data and implemented to obtain regular feedback from stakeholders for improving the programme.
18. Conduct regular labour market needs studies for the BSBF programme to ensure that it is relevant and up-to-date.