



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
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**Directorate of Higher Education
Reviews
Programmes-within-College Reviews Report**

**Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design
College of Arts, Science & Education
Ahlia University
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 8-11 May 2017
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Acronyms

ADREG	Admission and Registration System
APID	Association of Professional Interior designers
ATDC	Ahlia Training and Development Center
AU	Ahlia University
BID	Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design
BIM	Building Information Modeling
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CAQA	The Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CEAB	College External Advisory Board
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CIDA	Council for Interior Design Accreditation
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDEC	Interior Design Educators Council
IFI	International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers
IIDA	International Interior Design Association
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
LPRS	The Long-Term Programme Review Schedule

MIS	Management Information Systems
NASAD	National Association of Schools of Art and Design
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
TLAC	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews, which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the BQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 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 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Panel’) states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is ‘confidence’ in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a ‘limited confidence’ judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be ‘no confidence’, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Ahlia University

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Arts, Science & Education of Ahlia University was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 8-11 May 2017 for the academic programmes offered by the College; namely the Bachelor’s Degree in Interior Design and Bachelor’s Degree in Mass Communication and Public Relations.

Ahlia University was notified by the DHR/BQA on 8 January 2017 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Arts, Science & Education with the site visit taking place in May 2017. In preparation for the review, Ahlia University conducted self-evaluation of the two programmes and submitted the Self Evaluation Reports (SERs) with appendices on 8 March 2017. The DHR constituted two panels consisting of experts in the academic fields of Interior Design, Mass Communication and Public Relations, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panels comprised five members.

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design based on:

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that Ahlia University will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of Ahlia University to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, Ahlia University is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to Ahlia University for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty and administrative staff of the Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design.

C. Overview of the College of Arts, Science & Education

The College of Arts, Science & Education is one of the four colleges of Ahlia University (AU), which was established in 2001. AU currently offers eleven undergraduate programmes in a range of disciplines and three postgraduate programmes in cooperation with Brunel and George Washington universities. The college's vision is to 'achieve a position of international distinction by offering outstanding quality programmes in the areas of humanities and sciences'. The mission of the College is aligned with the vision and mission of AU, seeking to 'provide excellence in teaching and research in a stimulating learning environment conducive to creativity and innovation'. Currently, the College offers two bachelor degrees – one in Arabic and one in English- through two departments: the Department of Interior Design and the Department of Mass Communications and Public Relations. The statistics provided by the College during the site visit indicate that the total number of academic staff was 54; 41 of them are full-time and 13 are teaching on a part-time basis.

D. Overview of the Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design

The Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design was first offered in the academic year 2003-2004, and graduated its first batch, comprising four students, in 2006-2007. The programme is offered in English through the Department of Interior Design and currently there are seven faculty members contributing to the programme. According to the statistics provided by the institution, during the time of the site visit, there were 140 students registered in the programme. Since the commencement of the programme, 121 students have graduated.

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Does not satisfy
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Does not satisfy
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	No Confidence

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 1.1 The Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design programme has a clear academic planning framework and is structured in a way that ensures the linkage between the vision and mission of the University and the College of Arts, Science & Education, as well as with programme aims and intended learning outcomes. AU website declares the vision and the mission of the University and the College. The programme is identified as a Bachelor of Science as per the SER, however, it is in fact licensed as a Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design (BID) falling within the College of Arts, Science & Education. The Panel advises the College to revise the programme documentations to reflect the licenced title of the qualification. The BID programme aims are classified in the programme specification published on the AU website as knowledge, background and ability in the subject of design and organization of inner spaces. The interviews with the academic staff showed their awareness of the college's mission and confirmed that the programme aims are appropriate to its type and level. The interviews with the graduates, Advisory Board and employers demonstrated a continuous attempt of consultation with the local industry to ensure that the programme takes into consideration the needs and characteristics of the local labour market and produces employable graduates in line with the institution's mission as mentioned above. The Panel appreciates the detailed approach that AU has taken with respect to the academic planning for the BID programme. However, the Panel is of the view that the aims of the programme could be developed further in order to contribute to achieving AU's mission and strategic goals such as application, lifelong learning, innovation, and social context. The Panel advises the College to consider – for the next periodic review of the programme – developing clearer and broader aims that further contribute to the accomplishment of the institution's mission and the strategic plan of the College.
- 1.2 The curriculum is based on the developmental skills structure, which is appropriate for interior design pedagogy and education. The BID curriculum requires the completion of 134 credits covering 45 courses of which 43 are three credit hours courses. 'Human Rights Principles' course (HUMR 101) is a lecture course making the exception of being a two credit hours course and it is offered in the second semester of the first year. 'Interior Design Internship' course (INTR400) is a practical course of six credit hours offered in the summer of the third year. The total number of credit hours is appropriate for the achievement of the degree in interior design. On average, students completing the programme in eight semesters would take 17 credits per semester, which reflects a normal workload for an undergraduate programme. The Panel recognizes the institution's efforts in improving the BID programme (see

appreciations in paragraphs 3.2 and 4.6). However, the revised study plan was not implemented at the time of the site visit. Hence, the Panel considered the implemented study plan and noted that the current curriculum does not include important courses related to technical skills development such as Working Drawings for Construction. Moreover, the Panel is of the view that the subjects of Lighting Design, which was removed in the revised study plan, Textiles for Interiors and Building Information Modelling (BIM) should be introduced as core courses. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the curriculum to include courses such as Lighting Design, Textiles for Interiors, BIM, Working Drawings for Construction in addition to courses focusing on specifications, quantities, project tracking forms and contract. Furthermore, the Panel is of the view that the balance between the core subjects, electives and practice-based learning should be improved. The list of programme elective courses is limited, to six courses and three courses in the revised curriculum, for a very diversified major, preventing it from expansion in a fast moving and highly demanding diversified field. The Panel is of the view that the programme can benefit from introducing courses and tracks in areas in demand such as Hospitality Design, Integrated Computational Design and Industrial Design to satisfy the market's needs but also for a wider outreach, which should be based on a thorough study of market needs (see the recommendation in paragraph 4.10). The Panel, hence, recommends that the College should expand the pool of electives to include areas of interest for the students enrolled in the programme and increase employability of its graduates.

- 1.3 The breadth and depth of courses in the BID programme cover in general the requirements of an undergraduate interior design course. Most of the offered courses include the topics expected to be covered in similar courses and the textbooks adopted are appropriate. The syllabi of the courses offered in the programme were developed with references to 'new trends, current research, emerging technology and professional practice, as indicated in the SER. Course documents are also fairly designed containing detailed and relevant information on each course's aims, Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), teaching and assessment methods of each category of ILOs, weekly lecture topics, as well as key textbooks. However, a lack of appropriate academic journals was noticed and there is no evidence that the current syllabi were benchmarked with reference to professional associations and international accreditation bodies. The benchmarking against the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) standards was raised several times in course of the interviews during the site visit. However, no evidence of such benchmarking was provided to the Panel. Reference lists also need to have more current resources including journals and other forms of traditional and creative publications and research. The Panel could not also find firm evidence in the provided course files of research findings and professional practice being embedded in the course syllabi. In addition, the Panel notes that although 'Building Systems & Interior Codes' course

(INTD 306) covers well building systems and introduces major required topics such as construction systems and foundations, interior codes are addressed minimally, as evidenced in the provided course files. The 'Lighting & Acoustics' course (INTD 304) also focuses mainly on lighting, providing minimal acoustics theory and application. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the course syllabi of 'Building Systems & Interior Codes' as well as 'Lighting & Acoustics', and update the resources catering towards the progress and development of the BID syllabi for an overall enrichment.

- 1.4 Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are classified into four categories, Knowledge and Understanding (A1-A3), Subject-Specific Skills (B1-B3), Thinking Skills (C1-C3), and General and Transferrable Skills (D1-D4). These PILOs are aligned with the mission of the College and the aims of the programme covering a range of analysis and technical skills that the BID graduates are expected to acquire. Interviews with staff members showed an understanding of the PILOs and how these will ensure the delivery of the programme aims. However, the Panel could not find evidence in the course files to demonstrate the achievement of PILO (C2) 'Synthetic Skills' and the current PILOs do not include the development of the entrepreneurial skills except in PILO (D3) 'Organizational and development skills' where the point is addressed but not to the details needed. Furthermore, several PILOs are not appropriately written with measurable action verbs such as PILO B2, which is titled 'Application of Tools and Methods'. It includes three sub-statements: a) 'Gain facility in the employment of computer software and programmes', b) 'Gain aptitude in business management method in relation to integrated project management, value engineering and risk management essential for running an interior design company', and c) 'Proficient hands-on use of building materials in interior design'. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the PILOs to ensure that the PILOs are more comprehensive, and appropriately written with correct action verbs.
- 1.5 The Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are categorized into the four areas specified in the programme specifications. The programme curriculum map shows the mapping of the courses to the PILOs and each course specification contains a mapping of the CILOs to PILOs. The Panel examined the documentation provided and acknowledges that the CILOs are generally appropriate to the level of the course and its content. However, the Panel did not find clear evidence in terms of the mechanisms adopted to ensure their appropriateness. The benchmarking with international standards is absent, and the programme contents are mainly based on the 'current topics of research and new trends in the field' as reflected in the SER. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the current programme curriculum map does not include service courses and these service courses (e.g. 'Compositions of Native Speakers in Arabic' course (ARAB101), 'Fundamentals of Management' course (MAGT121), and 'Principles of Marketing' course (MAKT210)) are not appropriately mapped to the PILOs in the

revised curriculum map (2017-2018). The Panel urges the College to benchmark the learning outcomes (see the recommendation in paragraph 3.2) and advises the programme team to review the service courses' mappings to the PILOs.

- 1.6 The BID programme comprises a work-based learning component that consists of a six credit hours internship (INTR400) typically taken at the end of the third year. Internship may be taken after a student completes 90 credits and there is an assessment policy for the evaluation of the internships covering issues related to the responsibilities of all the involved parties including students, staff and employer. The CILOs of the internship course are appropriate and mapped to the PILOs to cover the practical aspects of knowledge and demonstrate the required employability skills. In addition to the internship, the programme includes a three-credit 'Portfolio Development' course (INTD407) where students compile all their work from the time they join the BID programme until they graduate. Interviewed staff clarified that both courses aim to equip students with generic transferable skills and at the same time achieve the required ILOs. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the practical skills gained when working on real life projects. The Panel appreciates that work-based learning supports students to gain practical experience and enable them to achieve subject-specific occupational skills relevant to the PILOs. Notwithstanding the above, although the SER states that AU 'mandates all BID students to participate in an appropriate internship in interior design', exceptions are made with some students already employed in their fourth year or due to the Bahraini market limitations. Since INTR400 is not mandatory and can be substituted by two programme electives, some students are missing on this practical opportunity to be introduced and prepared efficiently to the market. Furthermore, the internship process does not clearly determine how the internship is obtained and there is limited follow-up with the interns and the employers. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that students are exposed to professional practice with an experience that ensures the achievement of the internship learning outcomes.
- 1.7 There is a Teaching and Learning Plan published for 2016 - 2020, and it refers to the AU goals, and lists targets and activities. According to the SER, 'teaching/learning approaches adopted by Ahlia University are essentially geared toward encouragement of students' personal responsibility for learning and the development of the habit of self-learning even after graduation'. The teaching methods are also included in course specifications and are mapped to the CILOs. The interviews with academic staff and students confirmed that these methods are properly communicated to the relevant stakeholders and applied in practice. According to interviews with faculty, exposure to professional practice and the application of theory are achieved through researching topics of vocational relevance in Bahrain, the graduation project (INTD499) and the internship (INTR400). This is in addition to field trips, hosted seminars and guest speakers. Interviewed students also confirmed that all the BID

courses are available on 'MOODLE' and they get proper e-learning support from both faculty and the Information Communication Technology (ICT) staff. The Panel appreciates that there is a clear teaching and learning plan that includes a range of teaching methods, which are applied in practice and appropriate for the BID programme. However, the Panel notes that the teaching and learning plan does not provide some information relevant to the BID programme's specific needs such as design studio protocols, contact and non-contact hours' expectations and recommends that the College should ensure that the BID programme is provided with teaching and learning documents that include all the information relevant to the programme.

- 1.8 The assessment arrangements are provided and communicated to both staff and students *via* the university publications such as AU Student Assessment Manual, Guidelines for the Undergraduate Projects and Policy for Multi-Section Courses, published on the University Website and SharePoint. According to the SER formative and summative assessment methods are used to evaluate the knowledge/skills of students in relation to the CILOs and to enhance their academic performance. During interview sessions with faculty and students, the Panel was informed that the weights given for the tests and projects vary from a course to another and this information is communicated to the students through the course syllabus that is made available to them in the beginning of the semester. The review of the course files and students work samples provided to the Panel confirmed that courses with more practical components such as studios are weighing practice more than theoretical tests, which is in line with good practices. There are also transparent mechanisms for grading and verifying students' work using internal and external examiners and verifiers. As per SER, students receive written and verbal feedback and there is a clear process for student appeal. The Panel appreciates that the assessment arrangements are appropriate, transparent and well disseminated. However, the plagiarism policy needs to be revised to include visual plagiarism and copyright regulations. The Panel also notes that there is no mechanism in place to ensure that instructors adhere to the plagiarism policy and several plagiarism cases were detected upon examining the course files and student work. Furthermore, the interviews with students revealed that some students are not informed about the plagiarism policy and they even do not know what 'Turnitin' is. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the plagiarism policy and procedures and include visual plagiarism and copyright regulations. The Panel also urges the College to ensure effective implementation of this policy (see the recommendation in paragraph 3.3).

1.9 In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- AU adopts a detailed approach with respect to academic planning for the BID programme that ensures the linkage between the vision and mission of the University and the College of Arts, Science and Education.
- Work-based learning supports students to gain practical experience and enable them to achieve subject-specific occupational skills relevant to the programme's intended learning outcomes.
- There is a clear teaching and learning plan that includes a range of teaching methods, which are applied in practice and appropriate for the BID programme.
- The assessment arrangements are appropriate, transparent and well disseminated.

1.10 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- revise the curriculum to include courses such as Lighting Design, Textiles for Interiors, BIM, Working Drawings for Construction in addition to courses focusing on specifications, quantities, project tracking forms and contract
- expand the pool of electives to include areas of interest for the students enrolled in the programme and increase employability of graduates
- revise the course syllabi of Building Systems & Interior Codes as well as Lighting & Acoustics, and update the resources catering towards the progress and development of the BID syllabi for an overall enrichment
- revise the programme intended learning outcomes to ensure that these outcomes are appropriately written with correct action verbs
- ensure that students are exposed to professional practice with an experience that ensures the achievement of the internship learning outcomes
- ensure that the BID programme is provided with teaching and learning documents that include all the information relevant to the programme
- revise the plagiarism policy and procedures and include visual plagiarism and copyright regulations.

1.11 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme**.

2. Indicator 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.

- 2.1 There is a published admission policy for new students, which is available on the University Website. Although it provides clear instructions, the requirements are limited to institutional level only. It states that applicants must hold a recognized secondary school certificate or equivalent and demonstrate a satisfactory level of English proficiency. Mathematic and English tests are administered but these tests do not satisfy all the BID programme's requirements. Policy and procedures for accepting transfer students are appropriate and states the maximum number of credits (66%) and the minimum accepted grades (C) for equivalent courses that can be exempted. However, there is a need for additional admission requirements such as an aptitude test and/or portfolio review that evaluates the artistic and creative propensity of the applicants. The Panel also suggests additional programme interviews in exceptional cases. Furthermore, there is no formal benchmarking for the admission policy, which leads to limited admission policy revisions. The Panel recommends that the College should benchmark and revise the programme admission requirements to be in line with good practice for such discipline.
- 2.2 The statistics provided indicate that the number of students registered in the BID programme increased from 152 in 2013-2014 to 163 in 2015-2016 and there were 140 students registered in the programme in the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017. The mean length of study increased from 4.1 years in 2013-2014 to 4.3 in 2014-2015 and 4.6 in 2015-2016. Since 2006-2007, 121 students have graduated from the BID programme and their high school Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) ranged from 50% to 99.68%. However, the statistical data on admission and graduation is not analysed effectively by the programme to be able to provide additional meaningful comments. Since there are no specific tests and/or portfolio, admission requirements, the admission process do not ensure that admitted students are appropriate for the programme. Nevertheless, the Panel notes that the average yearly retention rate of interior design students is satisfactory. Statistics provided indicate that 78 (21.08%) out of a total of 370 students have discontinued their studies in the BID programme since its inception. There are remedial measures for inadequately prepared students in Mathematic and English and students have a programme advisor to seek assistance in programme specific courses, as indicated during interview with faculty and the administrative staff. There are also implemented measures to follow up on students' academic progress in relation to their profile. The Panel suggests enriching remedial measures for freshmen to provide additional support related to the artistic and technical nature of the programme.

- 2.3 The college organization chart is appropriate and well-structured. There are clear roles and responsibilities from the senior management to the leadership of the programme. The Chairperson of the Interior Design Department is responsible for the management of the programme, and the reporting lines are clear and effective. The Chairperson reports directly to the Dean. The Dean reports to the Vice President of Academic Affairs who in turn reports to the President then the Board of Trustees and there are established committees to ensure equity and transparency of decision-making. The Panel appreciates that there is transparency in decision-making and the programme overall organization is appropriate. The Panel also acknowledges the dedication of faculty members and the Chairperson of the Interior Design Department.
- 2.4 According to the SER, two assistant professors, four lecturers and one part-time faculty member serve the BID programme. The SER also indicates through simple division that the students-to-staff ratio is around 20:1 with the current 140 students and seven staff. The ratio is appropriate, but students need to be exposed on a regular basis to faculty with interior design specialization. Although the teaching experience of the faculty is sufficient, there is a lack of professional work experience and only two faculty members have interior design degrees. The Panel notes that there is a formal workload model for teaching load, research, academic advising, project supervising, committees and administration responsibilities and community engagement. The Panel is of the view that faculty teaching load is very high and allows limited time for other responsibilities and research, which was confirmed during interviews. Taking into consideration the nature of the degree and the long notional hours needed within the studio work, the Panel recommends that the College should recruit more faculty with interior design degrees and assess the workload of faculty members to ensure that they have sufficient time for research and community engagement activities.
- 2.5 There are clear policies and procedures in place for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and retention of faculty members, and these are included in the AU Academic Staff By-Laws. Recruitment is mostly based on the number of staff required for teaching the offered courses. It is raised by the Chairperson who consults with the Department Council and raises the request to the Dean of the College and the University Council for approval. However, the Panel noted through reviewing the CVs that there is a small number of faculty members with appropriate credentials in the programme (see paragraph 2.4). According to AU Academic Staff By-Laws, an induction programme is normally conducted to new staff members. The programme is coordinated by the Human Resources Directorate and includes an introduction to the university units and resources. New employees also receive general information and an overview of the organization to help them settle into their new role in AU. The retention rate (83.3%) of BID faculty is satisfactory, with only one faculty member retiring. Incentives to motivate faculty include salary increments and research honoraria. However, the Panel notes that faculty evaluation forms do not sufficiently

explore the career trajectory of academic staff or their teaching philosophy. The Panel suggests that faculty engagement in creative work and interior design practice through individual or group exhibitions held in reputable galleries and museums should be one of the measures of evaluation. In addition, election to, and awards given by, national organizations that recognize excellence in creative work, or professional achievements could be considered. The Panel also notes that AU has a clear policy for promotion and the interviews with faculty confirmed that this policy is well known to staff members and consistently implemented by the senior management. According to the SER, only one faculty member applied for promotion from assistant to associate professor (decision still pending) in the past two years and two additional faculty members were promoted but were not reappointed in the College. Nevertheless, faculty members confirmed during the interviews that the institution provides sufficient support for its staff to be promoted. The Panel advises the institution to develop and implement a plan to further support the promotions of its faculty members.

- 2.6 AU's Admission and Registration System (ADREG) provides different online features such as admissions, withdrawals, transfers, graduation data, assessments, time tabling, and general student activities including complaints. This Management Information System (MIS) provides a transparent grading system and online access to a variety of information and forms for both faculty and students. The Panel confirmed from the provided samples of the reports generated from the system that ADREG is used in generating reports to inform decision making in relation to student progression and programme management. Interviews with staff members and senior management also confirmed that the reports they receive allow for effective decision making that are relevant to the programme management and implementation, including the advisor and counselling reports which are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective monitoring of at-risk students. Furthermore, senior management uses ADREG to verify the number of classes that the student has missed before approving any enforced withdrawal requests. The Panel appreciates that the MIS is efficiently adapted to the needs of administrative staff, faculty and students.
- 2.7 There are well-established policies and procedures in place to ensure the security and safety of students' records. According to the Server Backup & Restore Procedure, electronic records, transcripts, course attendance and other personal information, are stored in ADREG and are password-protected. ADREG consists of a number of sub-systems that are backed up on daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis, and data is kept on- and off-campus site. Moreover, there are procedures in place for the entry and changes in grades, which require multi-level verification by the instructors, the Chairperson of the Department, the Dean and a quality assurance officer. The Panel confirmed during the site visit and through the tour that the physical security of all student records is in place and are kept in a safe environment. Furthermore, there is

an adequate disaster recovery plan, which includes software safeguards and a recovery plan for networks & communication and staff computers. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures in place to ensure the security and accuracy of students' records.

- 2.8 Based on the Panel's tour in the University, it was noted that there is an adequate number of classes, most of which are equipped with smart boards. There are also sufficient numbers of computer laboratories, ready access to e-mail and electronic resources, and the Wi-Fi coverage appears to be good throughout the campus. The Panel met the IT support staff members who provide substantial support to students including email services, troubleshooting support, software installation, and access to all online university services such as 'MOODLE' where all courses are uploaded. The Panel also checked the design studios and noted that they are inadequate in terms of the number, space and desk size, as there are only three studios for 14 design courses with 67 hours per week, which is not adequate for the current number of registered students. This was confirmed during the site visit, as some students pointed out that they need more and larger studios. The interviews with students also revealed that the software utilized in the courses of the programme are not uploaded on all the computers and they usually need to bring their own laptops. Moreover, the Panel noted the unavailability of some important facilities related to the BID programme such as, 3D printer, plotters and materials storeroom. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the facilities meet both students and staff needs and provide them with properly dedicated and equipped laboratories, studio and model making spaces, samples/material library, and equipment for plotting and printing (2D and 3D printing). In addition, given the nature and the specific needs of the programme, the Panel is of the view that faculty members could benefit from larger workspaces and private areas for consulting with students. The Panel also visited the university library and noted that the library has electronic resources, which can be accessed through the online system locally or remotely, and a very limited study area available for undergraduate students. Furthermore, the Panel noted that there are limited variety of interior design books related to some subjects. The Panel recommends that the College should expand the study area and enrich the library with additional references related to the BID programme (e.g. design theories, working details, furniture design, and interior design for hospitals, museums and administrative buildings).
- 2.9 According to the SER, AU has several tracking mechanisms to determine the usage of classrooms, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources. Authorised faculty and administrative staff are able to track the usage of classrooms and laboratories through ADREG. Furthermore, the database logs in the library are used to track the usage of e-resources. The tracking reports of 'MOODLE' usage can also be generated upon demand. However, the evidence provided is not sufficient to indicate that the tracking

reports are used to inform decision-making in a consistent and efficient manner within the BID programme. As indicated in paragraph 2.8, the software utilized in the programme are not uploaded on all the computers and students usually need to bring their own laptops. The Panel acknowledges the availability of tracking systems that generate relevant reports and advises the College to develop a mechanism to utilize these tracking systems in enhancing the utilization of current resources and identifying the shortcomings.

- 2.10 AU has an IT Center with six full-time IT specialists who are responsible for the ten AU laboratories and provide technical support for students, faculty and administrative staff. AU has also appointed student laboratory assistants to provide the needed support such as creating and managing accounts, answering queries for software usage, in laboratory-trouble shooting of the 20 terminals available per laboratory. Moreover, the Library has a manager and three employees available to assist the students on the use of the library and its online system. The guidelines for the usage of the library and the e-resources are distributed to the students. In addition, each student is assigned an academic advisor and AU has a student counsellor who helps students to deal with non-academic problems. AU Career Office also provides guidance to students in terms of internships and permanent jobs opportunities. The Panel noticed that the Career Office has a great opportunity to grow, should an effective market search plan be adopted to help the students obtain relevant internships and job opportunities. Furthermore, AU collects a number of surveys to explore the degree of satisfaction of its students and graduates mainly in relation to their learning experience. These surveys are conducted but the level of responsiveness is poor. The Panel is of the view that all these surveys should help the University to be attentive to the students' feedback and encourages the College to explore different ways to increase the response rates of its surveys. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that AU encourages students to use their own laptops and provide them with needed software free of charge, nonetheless the Panel notes that there is no written personal laptop usage policy adopted by the University. Although there is no clinic/ nurse in the premises, the Panel was informed during the site visit that the College contacts staff from the College of Medical & Health Sciences in case of emergencies. During the tour of the facilities, the Panel was also informed that students with disability can reach any point at AU; however, the Panel noticed that the ramps created at the programme floor are not appropriate and may present a risk for someone on a wheel-chair. The Panel acknowledges that the students are provided with sufficient support and advises the College to develop personal laptop usage policy, replace the ramps at the programme floor, and establish a dedicated clinic to deal with emergency cases.
- 2.11 AU has several arrangements for the induction of newly admitted and transferred students. These arrangements include university-wide induction sessions that are

offered to all students at the beginning of every academic year. AU also supplies all students with the Student Guide and the University Catalogue, which include useful information about AU's policies and regulations. The College of Arts, Science & Education also arranges an induction day every semester in which students, including those who were not able to attend the university induction sessions, gain familiarity with 'MOODLE', 'Turnitin', guidelines for writing projects and other rules and regulations of the College. Students from the first, second and third years that the Panel met with expressed their satisfaction with the induction arrangements. The Panel appreciates that there are good induction arrangements for newly admitted and transferred students, which meet their needs. The Panel also encourages the College to benefit from students' and staff feedback in enhancing the induction process.

- 2.12 AU implements an effective system to track and follow up the students at risk of academic failure. Students falling within CGPA range (CGPA < 2.0 & drop in CGPA ≥ 0.2 since the most recent semester) are identified and red-flagged by ADREG. The student academic advisors, the Chairperson of the Department, the course instructors and the University Counsellor are subsequently notified by email. At-risk students are entitled to a reduced load and are not permitted to register in any course without a prior approval from their academic advisors. This information was confirmed during the interview sessions with college administrative and registration staff, academic advisors, and students. The AU registration office issues every semester a list of 'at-risk' students and this list is communicated to the College. These are easily tracked using ADREG since the proceedings of the meetings with the academic advisors are entered into the system. An appropriate action plan in consultation with the student's advisor is implemented and followed by the student until reaching a good academic standing. It is the responsibility of the Senior Management to ensure that at-risk students are given the appropriate academic support through regular meetings with their academic advisors to guarantee their status at good academic standing and minutes of meetings provided to the Panel indicate that the Department Council discusses regularly the cases of at-risk students. Moreover, ADREG records show that only four at-risk cases were identified in the first term of 2016-2017. The students and alumni that the Panel met with during the site visit expressed their satisfaction with the support and guidance provided for them whenever they were falling under the at-risk status. The Panel appreciates that the College is implementing and following clear policies and procedures for identifying, advising and supporting the students at risk of academic failure through proper mechanisms.
- 2.13 AU has made provision for a number of activities that can enrich the students' experience during their years of study such as the university magazine, charity fundraising activities, and field trips for relevant interior design historical or architectural sites, in addition to social activities hosted at the University. There is evidence that these activities are taking place regularly. However, the Panel is of the

view that these activities are not sufficient enough to fulfil the professional and the academic needs of faculty and students in interior design. AU can benefit from the cooperation with professional bodies and association such as the International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI), Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC), Association of Professional Interior Designers (APID) and the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) in this regard. This is line with AU's strategic plan, which encourages internationalization and partnerships. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should enhance the learning environment and establish links with regional and international professional associations and bodies in line with AU's strategic plan.

2.14 In coming to its *conclusion* regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There is transparency in decision-making and the programme overall organization is appropriate.
- The management information system is efficiently adapted to the needs of administrative staff, faculty and students.
- There are policies and procedures in place to ensure the security and accuracy of students' records.
- There are good induction arrangements for newly admitted and transferred students, which meet their needs.
- The College is implementing and following clear policies and procedures for identifying, advising and supporting the students at risk of academic failure through proper mechanisms.

2.15 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- benchmark and revise the programme admission requirements to be in line with good practice for such discipline
- recruit more faculty with interior design degrees and assess the workload of faculty members to ensure that they have sufficient time for research and community engagement activities
- ensure that the facilities meet both students and staff needs and provide them with properly dedicated and equipped laboratories, studio and model making spaces, samples/material library, equipment for plotting and printing
- expand the study area and enrich the library with additional references related to the BID programme
- enhance the learning environment and establish links with regional and international professional associations and bodies in line with AU's strategic plan.

2.16 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme**.

3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 3.1 The Teaching and Learning Plan includes ten graduates' attributes that AU graduates are expected to have. Graduates' attributes are also clearly described in the aims of the programme, which state that graduates will develop high level of vocational proficiency, creative thinking skills, leadership and managerial skills. These aims also include lifelong learning, social responsibilities and ethical values. The PILOs collectively support the attainment of the programme's aims, which are consistent with the mission of the institution and the strategic goals. According to the SER, there is an internal verification of course specifications to ensure that CILOs are well articulated and appropriately assessed. However, the Panel notes that the institution does not have in place a mechanism to aggregate the assessment data and to demonstrate the achievement of PILOs and graduate attributes. The Panel recommends that the institution should address this issue. The Panel also notes that although 'awareness of the civic needs of multicultural local and global communities' is stated in AU's Teaching and Learning Plan, as one of the BID programme graduate attributes, only the ethical part is alluded to in PILO D4 'Ethics and Social Responsibility'. The Panel advises the College to explicitly indicate how this attribute is embedded in the PILOs.
- 3.2 AU has a well-established Programmatic Benchmarking Policy and Procedures, according to which benchmarking is a central part of the programme periodic review to identify areas for improvement based on good practices. It also states that 'the learning programme structure and curriculum, number of credits, work-based learning, professional and practical components, delivery modes, learning outcomes and graduate attributes' are the main focus of benchmarking. The programme has been benchmarked against two international programmes, Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design of the University of Edinburgh and Bachelor of Design in Interior Design at Queensland University of Technology in addition to one regional programme, Bachelor of Fine Arts in Interior Design of Virginia Commonwealth University-Qatar. Evidence provided indicates that there are some initial implementations of the benchmarking analysis. For example, through benchmarking it was concluded that additional implementation of software classes is needed; and a new course in Revit was launched in the second semester of the academic year 2016-2017. Nevertheless, the majority of the implementation is focused on the revised study plan that will be effective from 2017-2018. The Panel appreciates that the current benchmarking although informal and limited to the study plan is thorough and likely to lead to improvements. However, formal benchmarking with local, regional and international universities and in terms of professional accreditations and standards such as IFI,

CIDA, National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) is absent. The Panel recommends that the College should regularly conduct a comprehensive formal benchmarking against leading interior design programmes and professional body standards.

- 3.3 AU has a thorough Assessment Manual, which is revised and updated regularly. Assessment policy and procedures pertaining to the courses (e.g. the Policy for Multi-Section Courses and the Guidelines of Undergraduate Project) and overall assessment are also available on ADREG, on AU website and in Student Handbook. Students are informed of any changes in class, through email and the website. Assessment policy and procedures include the moderation of assessment and the use of external examiners. The Center for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) monitors the assessment process in cooperation with the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC). The evidence provided includes the form used by the CAQA to monitor the implementation of the AU Assessment Manual and samples of filled pre- and post-assessment moderation forms. The Panel appreciates that there are clear formal mechanisms to revise and monitor the implementation of the assessment policies and related procedures on a regular basis. However, the policy and procedures related to plagiarism and its detection need to be revised to include a clause for visual plagiarism and copyright regulations as noted in paragraph 1.8. More importantly, there is evidence of cases of unidentified plagiarism in student writing. For example, there is evidence of cases where students were given good grades on assignments that were completely copied from online sources and presented as original work for assessment. The Panel recommends that the College should take the necessary actions to ensure the implementation of the plagiarism policy across all assessment tasks and evaluate its effectiveness.
- 3.4 AU has several mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment with the CILOs. According to the SER and the interviews with faculty, at the beginning of each semester the course specifications are reviewed by a designated verifier to ensure that all the CILOs are assessed by suitable assessment tools as depicted in the Teaching & Learning-Assessment-NQF Descriptor Linkage Matrix. The internal verification of final examinations and major piece of course work also aims to ensure that the examination questions are appropriately aligned to the CILOs. The Chairperson of the Department audits the assessment of the verifier and the CAQA monitors the internal verification process; however, the Panel noted that the sample provided of the internal verification forms does not include any comments. Moreover, the Internal verification and Moderation Summary Report filled by the Chairperson of the Department is only a checklist and does not include any remarks. The evidence provided is not sufficient to indicate that these mechanisms are effective in detecting misalignment. Furthermore, the Panel noted that the final examinations of some courses do not cover all the CILOs mapped to the final examination as stipulated in the course

specifications. During interviews with faculty and senior management, they confirmed that the CILO/assessment mapping in the course specifications was inaccurate. More importantly, overall mapping is in need of revisions to provide clear alignment between graduate attributes, CILOs and PILOs. It is suggested to employ matrix format for outlining all aspects. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the CILO/ assessment mapping of all courses in line with the revised PILOs and graduate attributes (see the recommendation in paragraphs 1.4).

- 3.5 There is a formal mechanism to monitor the implementation of the programme's pre- and post-assessment verification/ moderation. According to AU Assessment Manual, the selected internal verifier examines the course syllabus two weeks before the beginning of the semester as well as the major piece of course work and the final examination at least two weeks before the assessment is conducted to ensure the validity of the assessment questions in relation to the CILOs. The course verifier, who is acquainted with the subject, fills the internal verification forms, which are reviewed by the Chairperson of the Department, and the latter submits the Internal Verification and Moderation Report to the Dean. This report should enable the Dean to monitor the process and offer 'critical feedback' to the Assessment Committee. However, as noted in paragraph 3.4, the samples provided of the internal verification forms as well as the report submitted to the Dean do not include any comments/remarks. The post-assessment moderation is conducted by the Internal Moderation Committee. This committee reviews samples of the final examination scripts and the major piece of course work against the model answers, marking criteria and rubrics, filling the relevant forms. However, the sample of filled forms provided did not include post-assessment moderation of major pieces of course work and final examination. The Panel also noted as indicated in paragraph 3.3 that there are cases of undetected plagiarized work, which indicate that the post-assessment moderation process was not effectively examining the students' assessed work and the process needs to be revised. The Panel recommends that the College should develop mechanisms to revise and assess the effectiveness of the internal verification/moderation processes.
- 3.6 AU Policy on the Application of External Moderation and Verification is included in the Assessment Manual. According to this policy, in each academic year, 33% of the courses are moderated and all the courses in a degree programme are expected to be covered within a three-year cycle. According to the SER, the external assessor reviews the course syllabus, major piece of course work and final examination scripts and provides recommendations that are taken into consideration the next time the courses are offered. There is also a clear Policy and Procedure for Nominating, Approving and Inviting the External Assessor/Examiner, according to which the College nominates three external examiners who are usually approached through networking referrals, as revealed to the Panel during the interviews with faculty and the external assessor. According to the selection criteria, nominees should hold 'Ph.D. qualification in the

field of the programme and/or extensive academic experience where appropriate'. The CVs of the nominees are reviewed by the University Council and only one of three nominees is selected to carry out the external moderation. Although, the SER, the provided evidence and the interviews with faculty confirmed that the recommendations of the external assessor are taken into consideration for the improvement of the programme, the Panel is of the view that considering the professional nature of the programme, it would further benefit from the inclusion of practitioners and academics with extensive specializations and professional expertise. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to broaden the range of external examiners appointed to the programme and include practitioners and academics with different specialization and professional experience.

- 3.7 During the site visit, the Panel reviewed the course files that encompassed a variety of student-assessed work including quizzes, assignments, design projects and final examinations and noted that the level of the students' assessed work is not up to the expected standards. There are cases of plagiarized work as indicated in paragraph 3.3, underdeveloped concepts and low quality student projects, including capstone projects. Although some aspects of the capstone projects are good, there is a need for improvement in the overall quality of student work. The missing interior design content within courses such as 'Building Systems & Interior Codes' and overall content application (see paragraph 1.3) are reflected in the quality of the work presented to the Panel. This can be alleviated by improving course offerings with specialization in interior design, and this is planned in the revised study plan that will be effective from 2017-2018. Further, existing courses require improvements to provide knowledge base for students to create better quality work. The Panel did not also find examples of student construction documents and there is no sufficient coverage for construction documents on the programme syllabi. Limited information is presented in 'Design Drawings I' course (INTD204), however the content is focused only on floor plans, elevations, and sections with limited converge of overall and specific construction documents information. In addition, the Panel noted that assessment rubrics for design projects are missing ('Introduction to Design I' course (INTD102), 'Colour Theory & Practice' course (INTD204), 'Design Drawing II' course (INTD211), and 'Lighting & Acoustics' course (INTD304)). These assessment rubrics provide feedback for student work and allow an opportunity for project improvements for faculty and students, subsequently improving quality of student work. Overall, the Panel concludes that students' work in the BID programme fail to meet the expected standards. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure the academic standards of graduates and that students' work including graduation projects is appropriate for the programme type and level.
- 3.8 According to the SER, faculty use various assessment methods to evaluate students' achievements. These methods include quizzes, assignments, design projects and final

examinations. The statistics provided in the SER show high performance in terms of grades. In the last three academic years (2013-2016), the average CGPA was 2.9 and about 20% of the graduates graduated with distinction. The SER also refers to the acceptance of two recent BID graduates in masters programmes offered overseas as an evidence to corroborate that the achievements of graduates are equivalent to other similar national and regional institutions. However, as the external assessor pointed out, there is 'no relation between normal distribution of the marks among the class and the outcomes' achievement of the students. The Panel is also concerned that the College does not measure and evaluate the achievement of the PILOs, which is crucial in identifying students' skills that require enhancement and ensure graduate attributes, as noted in paragraph 3.1. Furthermore, the Panel is concerned that there are no external examiners assigned for the capstone projects, which was corroborated during interviews with faculty, and the overall quality of the capstone projects is not up to the expected standards (see paragraph 3.11). The Panel urges the College to ensure that the level of assessed student work meet the programme's aims and learning outcomes (see the recommendations in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.11).

- 3.9 Cohort data is collected regularly; however, limited analysis is provided. According to the SER and the provided evidence, out of a total of 370 admitted students, 121 have graduated and 78 have discontinued their studies since the inception of the programme. The percentage of admitted students that discontinued their studies is 21.08% and the data provided is not sufficient to assess how students' progress from one academic year to the next. However, the SER indicates that there is a sound average yearly retention rate of 80.83% and the mean length of study is 4.3 years. The provided evidence also shows that AU was able to track the destinations of 48 out of 56 students that have graduated in the period from 2010 to 2014. Of those with known destinations, 77.1% are employed and more that 52.1% are working in their field of specialization. The interviews with faculty, employers, and alumni confirmed that the first job destinations of the graduates are frequently not related to interior design. However, the overall data appears to be consistent with other higher learning institutions of the similar kind and the Panel advises the College to conduct a more thorough and detailed analysis of the collected data.
- 3.10 AU Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship Programme and Assessment Manual govern the assessment of the work-based learning. According to AU Assessment Manual, the input of the site supervisor (50%) and the academic supervisor (10%), as well as the bi-monthly reports (20%) and a final report (20%) are used to assess the interns. The samples of reports provided and the interviews with faculty confirmed that the academic internship supervisor follows up on students' activities and participates in the students' evaluation, which is based on the evaluation form filled by the training supervisor, the student activity report, attendance, the final report submitted by the student and the presentation of his/her final report. The Panel was

also informed that the internship supervisors develop a training plan for each intern based on the employability skills listed in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship Programme. However, the mapping of the programme's aims to the employability skills listed in this document is not appropriate for the type and level of the programme. The Panel advises the College to revise the employability skills matrix. Furthermore, the Panel noted from the interviews with alumni and internship supervisors that the experience is not equal amongst all students and there is a lack of quality-work based learning in some cases. The largest obstacle, the Panel was informed, is finding appropriate internship sites and the Panel is of the view that there is a need for more community engagement to increase the Interior Design Department exposure to interior design professionals. The Panel also notes that the conducted market survey at AU is not appropriate for the requirements of the BID programme, where most of the leading interior design consultants are out of contact. This is also applicable in project management firms and less with the contractors where some of the graduates passed their internships with a leading contractor. Those, once explored and appropriately contacted, will provide uncountable opportunities for the students and will further support the achievement of PILOs. The Panel recommends that the College should research the market to identify suitable training places, where several areas of interior design are fast growing in Bahrain such as hospitality design, wellness & spas, stage and event set-ups, and retail design.

- 3.11 There is a formal scheduled class for 'Research Methods in Interior Design' course (IDRM 498), which ensures that students write a formal design proposal for the project. However, the 'Final Project in Interior Design' course (INTD 499) is not a formal class. Students are assigned faculty advisors with whom they meet throughout the semester. At the end, students present their projects to faculty; then the Department, led by the Chairperson, assigns a grade for each student. There are clear policies and procedures for supervision, stating the responsibilities of the supervisor and the student, in addition to the role of the two internal examiners. There is evidence that the records are saved in ADREG. CAQA is in charge of monitoring to ensure the implementation of good practices in supervision of the undergraduate projects. There are no external examiners for the capstone project, which was collaborated during the interview with Faculty. However, the overall quality of the capstone project is not up to the expected standards. Limited projects were presented in the exhibition format, which is a standard requirement for design capstone projects. The reviewed projects reveal limited written aspects outlining thesis statement, literature review summary and analysis, and collected evidence. The capstone project demonstrates design solutions, in some cases not efficient ones, but not the problem itself. There is also a need to improve accessibility to meet the needs of people with disabilities per international standards, as majority of the projects lacked compliance. The lower quality of students' work demonstrates that the implemented assessment process is not sufficient for the course. Faculty workload is high, leaving insufficient time for

quality meetings and student level of maturity and academic preparation is low, leading to overall difficulty to produce quality work. It is integral to improve the delivery methods for the design part of the capstone project and to invite external examiners to ensure that students' achievements meet the programme aims and learning outcomes. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the arrangements related to the capstone projects to enhance the level of student work and include external examiners.

- 3.12 There is a functioning College External Advisory Board (CEAB) for the Interior Design and the Mass Communication and Public Relations programmes. Its members are the AU President, the Dean of the College of Arts, Science & Education, one faculty member and eight external members. The roles and responsibilities of the CEAB include the provision of feedback on curriculum, technological developments and community needs. The CEAB is also expected to enhance the cooperation between the College and the community. The evidence provided indicates that members of the CEAB provide valuable feedback to improve the programme. However, according to the SER, since the CEAB inception in 2012-2013, only five meetings have been conducted with only two members (interior architects) from the interior design field. The Panel was informed that the College is planning to divide the CEAB into two separate entities to increase its efficiency as indicated in the SER. The Panel recommends that the College should expedite the implementation of its plan of dividing the Advisory Board, enhance its independency and include interior design professionals with diverse interior design backgrounds, who are willing to meet more regularly to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.
- 3.13 During interviews, employers displayed dissatisfaction with graduates' attributes and noted that there is a need for improvement of the graduate profile. At the same time, interviews with graduates displayed that they are satisfied with the knowledge and experience they gained at AU. However, graduates who were satisfied, also displayed independent skills, and were expanding their knowledge base outside of the University. Surveys of graduates and employers appear to be positive, but there is limited data analysis to make significant observations. The Panel is of the view that the College should improve its communication with employers, and develop and implement a mechanism for the dissemination of survey results (see the recommendation in paragraph 4.8).
- 3.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The current benchmarking although informal and limited to the study plan is thorough and likely to lead to improvements.
 - There are clear formal mechanisms to revise and monitor the implementation of the assessment policies and related procedures on a regular basis.

3.15 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- develop a mechanism to aggregate the assessment data to demonstrate the achievement of the programme intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes
- regularly conduct a comprehensive formal benchmarking against leading interior design programmes and professional body standards
- take the necessary actions to ensure the implementation of the plagiarism policy across all assessment tasks and evaluate its effectiveness
- revise the course intended learning outcome/ assessment mapping in all courses in line with the revised programme intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes
- develop mechanisms to revise and assess the effectiveness of the internal verification/moderation processes
- ensure the academic standards of graduates and that students' work including graduation projects is appropriate for the programme type and level
- research the market to identify suitable training places, where several areas of interior design are fast growing in Bahrain
- revise the arrangements related to the capstone projects to enhance contact hours with faculty and to include external examiners
- expedite the implementation of its plan of dividing the Advisory Board, enhance its independency and include interior design professionals with diverse interior design backgrounds, who are willing to meet more regularly to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

3.16 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

4. Indicator 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.

- 4.1 The AU Policies and Procedures Manual contains a wide array of institutional policies and procedures regarding aspects of governance, quality assurance, programme development, human resources, accounting, purchasing, ICT, benchmarking, promotion along with other administrative aspects. The custodian of these policies is the CAQA at AU. During interviews with staff, the Panel confirmed that there is a good awareness of policies amongst academic and administrative staff members and that policy changes are communicated in meetings or by email or through AU's intranet. The Panel appreciates that AU has a mechanism to govern the introduction of policies and procedures related to the programme and staff members are well aware of policies related to their work. However, during interview sessions, the Panel learnt that policies are revised when necessary and staff are informed about the policy changes but they are not involved in the decision-making. Furthermore, the Panel notes that some of the policies do not provide specific information relevant to the BID programme, taking in consideration the special nature and specific needs of this programme. Examples are the plagiarism policy should include visual plagiarism and copyright regulations; the teaching and learning policies should include design studio protocols, contact and non-contact hours' expectations. The Panel urges the College to revise the academic policies and procedures to provide details about the specific needs of the programme and stakeholders (see the recommendations in paragraphs 1.7, 1.8 and 3.6).
- 4.2 The Chairperson of the Department is the one responsible for the daily operation and the academic direction of the programme. He reports to the Dean who is managing the College of Arts, Science & Education. The academic responsibility at the institutional level lays with the Vice-President. For the academic standards at the department level there is a Department Council chaired by the Chairperson, which is the first body, approving any matters relevant to the programme. The Programme Review Committee also serves as a platform to review the programme and generate new ideas, and according to the SER, the Chairperson of the Department interacts regularly with a range of stakeholders who also provide a wide range of different types and sources of information pertaining to the programme. The Panel acknowledges that there is a responsible and dedicated leadership for the programme.
- 4.3 AU has an updated comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual that includes all policies and procedures related to quality assurance. As previously noted in paragraph 4.1, the CAQA has the overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating

the effectiveness of the quality management system at the University to ensure consistent implementation and quality delivery of offered programmes and is supported by an array of university-level committees and structures that complement the CAQA's work. The Panel found that both the College Council and Department Council play a significant role to complement the work of the CAQA. The Panel was provided with evidence of several meetings to show the involvement of these structures in monitoring and evaluating the quality management system in relation to programmes offered within the College. The Panel appreciates that there is a proper documentation of the quality assurance system and its management processes. However, upon reviewing onsite evidence such as course files and the Long-Term Programme Review Schedule (LPRS) report, the Panel noted that the implementation and the monitoring of the effectiveness of these quality assurance procedures was not always reflected in the overall activities within the BID programme. For example, with regard to the final examination in some courses, the Panel noted that the questions do not cover all the CILOs mapped to the final examination as specified in the course specifications. Moreover, the Panel reviewed the LPRS report on the BID programme, and noted that some of the remarks stated on some CILOs are not applicable in the courses. As example there is a remark, in the LPRS report, on the ILO (A1) in 'Design Studio I' course (INTD300) while according to INTD300 course specification, this ILO is not applicable. The Panel advises the CAQA to better monitor the implementation and the effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures.

- 4.4 The CAQA conducts regular workshops for the staff members and conducts surveys to collect the feedback, which indicates their satisfaction with these workshops. However, in the quality assurance list of workshops/seminars attended during the years 2013-2017, the Panel noted that there was no attendees from the faculty of the BID programme except the Chairperson of the Department. On the other hand, most of the staff members are assigned to serve in different committees to disseminate good practices to their departments either in the meetings of the Department Council or through AU's intranet. Moreover, during interviews, the Panel noted that faculty members, in general, have a good understanding of the implemented quality assurance arrangements in the College and their role in the internal quality assurance system. The Panel acknowledges that staff members, in general, are aware of the college's quality assurance arrangements and encourages the Department to embrace quality assurance as a mechanism to substantially enhance the quality of programmes, rather than seeing it as a compliance requirement that has to be met (see paragraph 4.6).
- 4.5 There is a clear policy on the establishment of the new programmes in the Policy on Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes, which is associated, with the Revised Process for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Undergraduate Programmes document. The introduction of a new programme is based on several

factors such as Market and stakeholders' needs; recent developments in technology and recent trends; national and regional competition; and economic, environmental and societal needs. However, no new programmes have been recently considered in the Arts, Science & Education College; rather, the existing programmes in the College are in the process of being improved. The Panel is satisfied with the procedures that AU follows when introducing and developing new programmes.

- 4.6 According to the SER, the internal evaluation of the BID programme is conducted at the beginning of each semester during which each course syllabus is evaluated in terms of CILOs, teaching and assessment methods and textbooks. The assigned verifier has to complete a form entitled 'Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specification' and each course instructor receives a feedback on his/her courses to enhance these courses, if needed, prior to the beginning of the semester. Nevertheless, the Panel noted that most of the internal verification of course specifications and assessment were routinely checked with no remarks or suggested changes and did not present a critical review. From interviews with the academic staff and senior management, the Panel learnt that student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester to generate feedback on teaching and learning. However, there is no evidence that the process of student evaluation has led to improvements in specific courses in the BID programme. The Panel recommends that the College should monitor the annual evaluation process to ensure that it is effectively utilized within the BID programme.
- 4.7 The programmes at AU are reviewed once every three years. There is a 'Quality Periodic Programme Review and Utilization of Feedback' procedure to 'ensure that the feedback is utilized in the programme improvements' as stated in the SER. The periodic review involves several parties including the Department Programme Review Committee, Curriculum Review Committee, and the TLAC and is overseen by the CAQA. The process of the periodic review requires feedback from course instructors, alumni and employer surveys, benchmarking and market research studies, student evaluations and input from the CEAB. During its interviews with senior management and faculty, the Panel was informed that the BID programme has already completed its review as per the LPRS and a new study plan is prepared to be implemented during the academic year 2017-2018. The Panel notes that the new curriculum is noticeably different from the previous one and has many improvements. As example, the Interior Design Studio courses are introduced earlier in the Second Year, which will increase the contact hours of these courses. Moreover, there is a better balance between theory and practice and subjects of history, studio, construction and technology are introduced in every semester. The Panel appreciates that the periodic review has resulted in considerable improvements in the new study plan and advises the College to expand and further develop the elective courses, which are limited and lack innovation (see paragraph 1.2).

- 4.8 The SER refers to a number of surveys that are periodically conducted. The Center for Measurement and Evaluation is responsible for collecting and sharing the feedback, while the Institutional Performance Measurement Office provides statistical data. The student satisfaction surveys tackle the quality of course offerings and evaluation of the instructors. However, there is no evident data provided to indicate that AU surveys students regarding to admission, registration, facilities, sources, and administrative issues. The CAQA implements a 'Quality Periodic Programme Review and Utilization of Feedback' procedure in order to ensure that feedback is utilized in improving the programme. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with action plans that have emanated from these surveys. The Panel met the members of the Advisory Board who confirmed that they provide their feedback on the programme during the meetings; however, they were not able to confirm the use of their feedback in the programme review, and quality assurance mechanisms. The Panel was also provided with a summary report for the satisfaction of the employers. However, from the interview with the employers, the Panel learnt that communication with employers is almost non-existent. The Panel recommends the College should communicate regularly with employers, and develop and implement a mechanism for the dissemination of survey results to make outcomes communicated back to relevant stakeholders.
- 4.9 The Ahlia Training and Development Center (ATDC) is responsible for the professional development of both academic and administrative staff. ATDC has designed a staff development plan that identifies the training and development needs of staff. The list of activities places emphasis on teaching and learning and research-related workshops, in addition to managerial and technical skills. The Panel suggests that the professional plan includes more elements related to creative research and professional practice and introduce research-based activities as part of the training. From the provided evidence and the interviews with senior management and faculty, the Panel learnt that the process is linked to staff evaluation and is monitored and evaluated through appropriate mechanisms, as the ATDC has developed a template for evaluating the effectiveness of the presented workshops. Interviewed staff showed full awareness and clear understanding of these policies and procedures and indicated that they benefited from the workshops and according to the Professional Development Activities Report for 2016, many of the academic and administrative staff members of the College have attended these workshops. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and administrative staff.
- 4.10 The SER states that the College of Arts, Science & Education depends on a number of resources to scope labour market needs such as the CEAB, surveying BID alumni and employers, and convening independent professionals in industry and peer institutions through the CEAB. According to the minutes of the Department Council meeting in January 2017 and the interview with the senior management, the Panel learnt that the

Department has used market needs analysis in developing the new study plan. This was confirmed by the evidence provided, which shows that the findings of some market studies at the national, regional and international level were analysed and were taken into consideration in the revision of the study plan. Based on this analysis, the Department Council decided to place more emphasis on some specialist interior design software. Nevertheless, the evidence provided is not sufficient to indicate that the process of scoping the market is done systematically. Furthermore, the Panel is of the view that the College could do more in exploring the different areas of Interior Design to create job opportunities for graduates. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should regularly and systemically scope the labour market needs to identify long- and short-term trends within the interior design field.

4.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- AU has a mechanism to govern the introduction of policies and procedures related to the programme and staff members are well aware of policies related to their work.
- There is a proper documentation of the quality assurance system and its management processes.
- The periodic review has resulted in considerable improvements in the new study plan.
- There are suitable arrangements in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and administrative staff.

4.12 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- monitor the annual evaluation process to ensure that it is effectively utilized by the Department
- communicate regularly with employers, and develop and implement a mechanism for the dissemination of survey results to make outcomes communicated back to relevant stakeholders
- regularly and systemically scope labour market needs to identify long- and short-term trends within the interior design field.

4.13 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**.

5. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the *DHR/BQA Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2014*:

There is no confidence in the Bachelor's Degree in Interior Design of College of Arts, Science & Education offered by the Ahlia University.