



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Institutional Review Report

**Bahrain Polytechnic
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 7-11 April 2019

HI014-C2-R005

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Acronyms

ADD	Academic Development Department
APR	Academic Programme Review
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
BoT	Board of Trustees
BP	Bahrain Polytechnic
BPSC	Bahrain Polytechnic Student Council
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CEFR	Common European Framework for Referencing Languages
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CTTL	Certificate of Tertiary Teaching and Learning
DARE	Deanship of Applied Research and Enterprise
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICTS	Information Communication Technology Services
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LLC	Library Learning Centre
LMS	Learning Management System

MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAD	Programme Approval Document
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
PD	Professional Development
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMAP	Quality Management and Planning
QMS	Quality Management System
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SMT	Senior Management Team
WBL	Work-Based Learning

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 Programme Reviews where the quality of learning and academic standards are judged in specific programmes. The DHR completed the first cycle of institutional reviews in 2013, and the second cycle is scheduled for 2018-2019, in accordance with the Institutional Quality Reviews Framework (Cycle 2) approved by the Cabinet (Resolution No. 38 of 2015). The main objectives of the institutional reviews are:

1. To enhance the quality of higher education in the Kingdom of Bahrain by conducting reviews to assess the performance of the HEIs operating in the Kingdom, against a predefined set of indicators and provide a summative judgment while identifying areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
2. To ensure that there is public accountability of higher education providers through the provision of an objective assessment of the quality of each provider, which produces published reports and summative judgements for the use of parents, students, and the Higher Education Council (HEC), and other relevant bodies.
3. To identify good practice where it exists and disseminate it throughout the Bahraini higher education sector.

The institutional review process will assess the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance arrangements against a pre-defined set of standards and indicators and will identify areas of strength and areas of improvement. Each indicator will have a judgement; i.e. 'addressed' or 'not addressed', which collectively will lead to a Standard's judgement. A Standard will be given a judgement of 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed' depending on the number of indicators 'addressed' within a Standard, as detailed in the Institutional Quality Reviews Framework (Cycle 2). The aggregate of Standards' judgements will lead to an overarching judgement – 'meets quality assurance requirements', 'emerging quality assurance requirements', 'does not meet quality assurance requirements', as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Overall Judgements

Judgement	Description
Meets quality assurance requirements	The institution must address all eight Standards
Emerging quality assurance requirements	The institution must address a minimum of five Standards including Standards 1, 4 and 6 with the remaining Standards being at least partially satisfied.
Does not meet quality assurance requirements	The institution does not address any of the above two overall judgements

II. The Institution Profile

Institution Name	Bahrain Polytechnic
Year of Establishment	2008
Location	Road 4003, Block 840, Isa Town Kingdom of Bahrain
Number of Colleges	2
Names of Colleges	1. Faculty of Business and International Logistics Management 2. Faculty of Engineering, Design and Information Communication Technology
Number of Qualifications	22
Number of Programmes	22
Number of Enrolled Current Students	2085
Number of Graduates	1724
Number of Academic Staff Members	161
Number of Administrative Staff Members	228

III. Judgment Summary

The Institution's Judgement: Meets QA Requirements

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgment
Standard 1	Mission, Governance and Management	Addressed
Indicator 1	Mission	Addressed
Indicator 2	Governance and Management	Addressed
Indicator 3	Strategic Plan	Addressed
Indicator 4	Organizational Structure	Addressed
Indicator 5	Management of Academic Standards:	Addressed
Indicator 6	Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education	Addressed
Standard 2	Quality Assurance and Enhancement	Addressed
Indicator 7	Quality Assurance	Addressed
Indicator 8	Benchmarking and Surveys	Addressed
Indicator 9	Security of Learner Records and Certification	Addressed
Standard 3	Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure	Addressed
Indicator 10	Learning Resources	Addressed
Indicator 11	ICT	Addressed
Indicator 12	Infrastructure	Addressed
Standard 4	The Quality of Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 13	Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes	Addressed
Indicator 14	Admissions	Addressed

Indicator 15	Introduction and Review of Programmes	Addressed
Indicator 16	Student Assessment and Moderation	Addressed
Indicator 17	The Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 18	Recognition of Prior Learning	Addressed
Indicator 19	Short courses	Not Applicable
Standard 5	Student Support Services	Addressed
Indicator 20	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 6	Human Resources Management	Addressed
Indicator 21	Human Resources	Addressed
Indicator 22	Staff Development	Addressed
Standard 7	Research	Addressed
Indicator 23	Research	Addressed
Indicator 24	Higher degrees with research	Addressed
Standard 8	Community Engagement	Addressed
Indicator 25	Community Engagement	Addressed

IV. Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

Mission, Governance and Management

The institution has an appropriate mission statement that is translated into strategic and operational plans and has a well-established, effective governance and management system that enables structures to carry out their different responsibilities to achieve the mission.

Indicator 1: Mission

The institution has a clearly stated mission that reflects the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement of a higher education institution that is appropriate for the institutional type and the programmes qualifications offered.

Judgement: Addressed

Bahrain Polytechnic (BP) has a clear and well-articulated mission namely, 'To produce professional and enterprising graduates with 21st Century skills necessary for the needs of the community, locally, regionally, and internationally'. This mission helps in the realization of BP's vision to become 'a world class provider of applied higher education'. Both the vision and mission are reflected in a set of strategic goals that reflect the three core functions of a HEI, namely teaching and learning, research and community engagement. These goals include the development of an applied research culture, to engage in solving societal and industrial problems and enhance opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation, in addition to the fostering of active and positive engagement with BP's stakeholders nationally, regionally and globally, to enhance its contribution to social and economic wellbeing.

Based on interviews with senior management and submitted evidence, the current mission was developed through a series of consultation in 2012, where there was a broad reflection across the Institution and considerable stakeholders' involvement/input (staff, students, industry groups, etc.). Additionally, senior management explained that the mission is very reflective of BP's obligation to prepare young Bahrainis for the jobs available in the Kingdom, with the aim of driving growth in the private sector. This mission was approved by the Board of Trustees (BoT) in January 2013. The mission is clearly displayed across the Institution and is published in the Student Handbook and on the BP website. It is also disseminated to staff through the induction process and through institution-wide workshops, during which its key elements are covered.

What was obvious to the Panel during the site visit is the extent to which the mission is embraced by all staff; as, this was clearly evident at all levels of the Institution. While the Panel acknowledges the wide adoption and support of the mission by the BP staff, the Panel nonetheless advises the Institution to continue reviewing and refreshing its mission in light of the new developing status of BP as a result of the recent Royal Decree of 2018, which grants BP greater autonomy and independence than it has had in the past and also in light of BP's aspiration to become a university focusing on applied research

through industry-based projects, as was explained in interviews with senior management. Overall, the Panel finds that the BP mission is appropriate for the institution type and its programme offerings. Hence, the indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 2: Governance and Management

The institution exhibits sound governance and management practices and financial management is linked with institutional planning in respect of its operations and the three core functions.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has an active BoT with clear terms of reference in relation to overall planning, institutional goal-setting, oversight, financial management, and other responsibilities. Interviews with BoT members confirmed to the Panel that there is a clear demarcation of areas of responsibility and duties between them and the BP Senior Management Team (SMT). The latter deals with day-to-day matters while the Board is more strategic and concerned with the long-term development of the Institution. In more detail, the BoT role is to look after the policy side and to make related suggestions, while ensuring that the executive side at BP applies the policies and delivers on the expectations made by the government of Bahrain. BoT meetings with BP management are set to be a minimum of four times per academic year and minutes of board meetings demonstrate the consistency and effectiveness of such meetings.

With respect to the BoT membership, this is by Royal Appointment, as per the Decree that mandates the maximum number of board members to be nine, with appropriate qualifications and technical, professional, and managerial experience. Upon appointment, the new members receive a formal induction, which interviewed members of the Board expressed high satisfaction with. The Panel acknowledges the effective induction of the Board and the high level of knowledge of the Board members in relation to the operational and strategic planning of the Institution. Nevertheless, no mention was made anywhere regarding the availability of mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of the BoT (e.g. formal/self-evaluation) in line with good practices. Therefore, the Panel advises BP to consider possible ways for evaluating the performance and effectiveness of the Board.

In addition to the BoT, the Institution is supported in its operations by a significant number of committees, of which some are focused on academic issues while others are more administrative. The committees have clear terms of reference and recorded minutes of attendance. The responsibilities of the committees are delegated by BP's Chief Executive Officer (CEO), whose authority for the strategic and operational management of BP is delegated by the BoT and guided by the institution's strategic plan and goals, which are all translated into Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). As mentioned in the SER, integral to the strategic planning process is the identification of key financial and resource requirements at a macro level and their allocation accordingly. Progress towards the achievement of the KPIs and associated strategic goals is reported to the SMT and BoT on a regular basis; although, it

is not quite clear how regular this is. Nonetheless, interviews with senior management revealed that the practice at BP has been to conduct a presentation on the progress of strategic goals' achievement in every Board meeting. This is in addition to regular meetings held between the CEO and other members of the SMT to review and discuss the Executive Management Business Operational Plan, which falls under BP's Strategic Plan and includes short-term objectives related to the latter's longer-term ones.

Financially, it is important to note that at the beginning of 2015, BP transitioned to the Ministry of Finance's accounting and finance system with appropriate auditing arrangements. What this has entailed since then is the dictating of the BP budget by the Ministry. Despite this, budget planning in the Institution takes place and follows an annual budget cycle at faculty and directorate level, whereby budgets are prepared on operational, capital expenditure, or project basis. The planned budget is then presented by the executive management of BP to the BoT members for their further advice and approval. Once the proposed budget is considered completed, it is submitted to the Ministry of Finance after being reviewed by the Finance Directorate at BP. In addition to providing advice on the planned budget, the BoT is responsible for delegating authority to the CEO in terms of budgetary management, where delegation on both financial and managerial aspects at BP takes place through two official delegation registers, one financial and the other managerial.

Moreover, BP has a Financial Management Policy Framework which sets priorities for the institution's expenditure on an annual basis. The Institution also has a related Institutional Risk Management Policy and Mitigation Plan, which the Panel finds useful. Oversight is also provided by the institution's Audit Committee, which has appointed internal and external auditors, who conduct reviews of financial management and recommend improvements to existing financial practices within the Institution. Audit results are reported to the SMT and the BoT and annual financial statements are issued to verify processes. During the site visit, a number of periodic review reports (including Operation Budget Utilization and Manpower Budget Utilization) were reviewed by the Panel and found to be satisfactory. The Panel also had access to a number of confidential audit reports and found them to be on the whole appropriate. Nonetheless, there was some evidence indicating slow follow-up actions by relevant staff, for example, in relation to the update of the fixed assets register. This was partly attributed to staff shortages, which - as became apparent to the Panel - is an issue that the Institution faces across a number of its activities. Consequently, the Panel finds this staff shortage an area of improvement in need of addressing, as discussed in Indicator 21. The Panel also recommends that BP should ensure more effective follow-up measures in relation to internal and external auditing processes. In general, however, the Panel is satisfied with the governance and management practices in place, including the fiscal management arrangements, and considers this indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Ensure a timely and efficient follow-up in relation to internal and external auditing processes.

Indicator 3: Strategic Plan

There is a strategic plan, showing how the mission will be pursued, which is translated into operational plans that include key performance indicators and annual targets with respect to the three core functions with evidence that the plan is implemented and monitored.

Judgement: Addressed

The Strategic Plan 2015-2019 was developed between the years 2012 and 2014 through a process of consultations with various stakeholders. This development process was a robust exercise that included SWOT, GAP, and PESTLE analyses and in which the BP Quality Unit was actively involved. Evidence indicates the organization of related staff and students' workshops by the Strategic Planning Committee, for the elicitation of feedback on the Strategic Plan. Upon approval of the Plan in 2014, it was made available and accessible to all staff members on SharePoint, as was confirmed to the Panel in the SharePoint demonstration during the site visit tour. Interviews with senior management helped explain to the Panel how the BP vision and mission are translated into the Strategic Plan, where it was mentioned that the former are aligned with the vision of Bahrain and that whenever the BP Strategic Plan is being developed, alignment is ensured between it and the strategic plan of the Kingdom.

The 2015-2019 Strategic Plan of BP has five goals with related KPIs set out in it, which are: *Start up to Sustainability; Graduate Reputation; Assurance of Learning; Engagement for Impact; and Entrepreneurship and Research*. During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to assess whether the KPIs are well-understood by the staff and, as a result, was able to acknowledge that this is in fact the case across all levels of the Institution.

With respect to the monitoring of the Strategic Plan implementation, this is achieved through the Strategic Planning Committee, which is a sub-committee of the SMT. As was confirmed through interviews and meeting minutes, this Committee, with other members of the SMT, regularly meet with the CEO to discuss and review progress in terms of KPIs that are outlined in the detailed operational plans of the Institution. These operational plans are themselves developed from the Strategic Plan and are presented at BoT meetings for its members' update. In addition, the operational plans with indications of the progress made to date with respect to the achievement of the KPIs, are also available for all staff members on SharePoint. The Panel appreciates this practice of keeping staff informed of the status of implementation of the operational plans, related follow-ups, and progress on KPIs. Additionally, the Panel was presented with sufficient evidence of the operational KPIs being consistently reviewed by the SMT and finds the current KPIs to be appropriately aspirational. However, as acknowledged by the Institution in site visit interviews, the Panel finds that the new strategic plan must reflect the institution's new developing status resulting from the recent Royal Decree of 2018 and the institution's aspiration to become a university focusing on applied research.

Finally, in addition to these monitoring processes and reviews, the BoT issues a Periodic Report on a quarterly basis, which sets out the institutional achievements against the Strategic Plan's set targets. The issuance of this report is based on a process of data collection and reporting from the concerned faculties or directorates at the Institution, after which its approval will be granted by the SMT before it

is sent to the BoT. Once received, the BoT issues its quarterly report, which then leads to an annual Cabinet Affairs Report based on data derived from the BoT's four issued periodic reports each year. The Panel finds this particular process to be robust and transparent. The Panel is also, in general, satisfied with BP's practices in terms of the development, implementation, and monitoring of its Strategic Plan, for the effective pursuance of the institution's mission and vision and the fulfillment of its core functions. This indicator is therefore addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 4: Organizational Structure

The institution has a clear organizational and management structure and there is student participation in decision-making where appropriate.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has what is referred to as a 'Top Organizational Chart', which shows the highest senior management positions as well as the main directorates beneath them. There are also individual draft organizational charts for the different directorates. However, although approved by the BoT, these charts are still pending approval by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and are not yet fully implemented. All these organizational charts are available to staff members on SharePoint; whereas, students are provided with the contact information of key personnel and academic faculty members through the BP website and their Student Handbook. The Panel finds that these organizational charts indicate clear reporting lines and levels of authority. Moreover, all staff members receive upon appointment clear and detailed job descriptions through the performance management system 'Aadaa' and they sign these off before they are submitted to the Human Resources (HR) department. This process is repeated on an annual basis. Samples of job descriptions, including detailed work/activity planning templates for academic staff, were reviewed by the Panel during the site visit and were found to be satisfactory in terms of the expectations they entail. However, the Panel is concerned that the multi positions assumed by the current CEO (CEO, Deputy CEO for Academic Services, Chair of a large number of BP Committees), with the long list of responsibilities attached to all of these positions, may be overwhelming and may negatively affect the effectiveness of the CEO's performance. The Panel therefore recommends that actions should be taken to ensure that main senior positions at BP are occupied, and that delegation of duties be resorted to in the meantime until the positions are filled.

The Bahrain Polytechnic has a committees' policy which was approved by the BoT in 2016. The purpose of this policy is to organize the processes of shared responsibilities, decision-making, and the provision of input and feedback from internal and external stakeholders of the Institution. This policy reinforces BP's belief in the important role played by committees in enriching and supporting the strategic direction of the Institution. In result, there exists in BP a logical and transparent management committee structure with clear terms of reference. This structure includes committees operating at three levels based on who establishes them, whether the CEO or the SMT or the faculty or division heads. This is in

addition to there being an appropriate hierarchy of committees, with committees such as the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC), Programme Committees, and Research Committee directly reporting to the Academic Board, whose members in turn report to the SMT. Furthermore, in line with the CSB guidelines and those of the Ministry of Finance, a number of compulsory committees are required, including: The Training and Development Committee; Recruitment Committee, and the Purchasing Committee.

As per the Committees' Policy, all terms of reference of committees and meeting documentation, including minutes of meetings, must be published on SharePoint. The Panel notes the large number of active committees at BP and acknowledges the use of SharePoint by the Quality Management Analysis and Planning Directorate to collate and consolidate the committees' data and reporting it in one location. The Panel is also of the view that this type of consolidation of data could facilitate a formal and systematic evaluation process of committees' performance. Nonetheless, the Panel did not find during the review clear evidence of such a formal and systematic process, despite inquiring about it. During interviews with various committee representatives, the Panel was only informed that committees' work and meeting minutes are checked by a higher committee; while, the SER only mentions that periodic reviews of committees' performance take place 'as required'. In both cases, there is lack of clarity as to who exactly conducts the evaluation/review, how, when, and, more importantly, what happens after the evaluation to close the review loop. The Panel recommends therefore that BP should develop and implement a formal and systematic process for evaluating the effectiveness of committees' performance and should clearly document it.

With respect to decision-making within the Institution, this is reinforced by industry involvement through the Programme/Curriculum Advisory Committees and through external representatives serving as members on the BoT. Representation also takes place for tutors, students and managers from individual faculties, who are involved in informal working groups, focus groups, and in some committees and boards. For students, this includes representation on Faculty Boards and the Academic Board. However, further probing during site visit interviews with different stakeholders clarified to the Panel that such student representation is neither formal nor systematic. Consequently, the Panel recommends that BP should seriously consider taking action that would turn what is now a form of informal student representation on decision-making bodies into a formal and systematic type. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that BP has responded to the last BQA Review of 2012, by introducing some improvements to student involvement in decision-making processes, through the establishment of the BP Students' Council (BPSC). Site visit interviews with BPSC members and with other students as well, indicated to the Panel a general level of satisfaction with such an involvement, especially since the BPSC students receive appropriate training to assist them in their representational roles. In conclusion, the Panel is of the view that the BP organizational and management structure is sufficiently clear and fit for purpose, with opportunities for considering stakeholders' viewpoints in decision-making where appropriate. Hence, this indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Ensure that main senior positions in the Institution are occupied and, in the meantime, delegate responsibilities to those at lower levels in the organizational hierarchy until those senior positions are filled.
- Develop, and implement a formal and systematic process for evaluating the effectiveness of committees' performance.
- Ensure a formal and systematic student representation on decision-making bodies such as committees and boards, where appropriate.

Indicator 5: Management of Academic Standards

The institution demonstrates a strong concern for the maintenance of academic standards and emphasizes academic integrity throughout its teaching and research activities.

Judgement: Addressed

By Royal Decree, the BoT of BP is consigned with the overall responsibility of overseeing the management of academic standards. Even though the BoT is not involved in the day-to-day operational aspects of education and training programmes, research studies, and related activities; it, nevertheless, has the responsibility of approving and supervising them, as well as of overseeing the academic standards of BP graduates. From the evidence provided and from site visit interviews, the Panel found that the Institution has in place robust policies and procedures for managing and ensuring academic standards, such as: The Institutional T&L Policy, Assessment and Moderation Policy, T&L Principles, and E-Learning Strategy and Guiding Principles. This is in addition to the implementation of a number of reviews, including annual and periodic programme reviews, external programme reviews, periodic reviews of the T&L Policy, and assessment moderation audits. An example of good practice that became evident during the site visit was the Institutional Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which is a comprehensive plan covering all aspects of the Institution and including good evidence of follow-up actions that help in further ensuring maintenance of academic standards. Accordingly, it is evident that a culture of high academic standards is embedded across the Institution, which the Panel finds worthy of appreciation.

In addition, BP has sound processes in place for dealing with academic misconduct by students and staff. These processes are guided by appropriate policies and procedures on, for example, academic integrity and honesty, results and reporting, and assessment and moderation. There is also a clear approach to the issue of plagiarism, with appropriate procedures and sanctions backed up by statistical data; although, there remain to be some issues with consistency of implementation, as will be further elaborated in this Report later on (in Indicator 16). During the site visit, the Panel reviewed samples of plagiarism cases and related follow-up actions taken. The Panel also noticed that staff and students are fully aware of both their rights and responsibilities on academic misconduct matters and that they understand the relevant policies and processes that are in place. With respect to complaints, appeals, and grievances of students, BP has a number of policies that govern these areas. For example, the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy sets out students' rights and indicates the basis of any complaint. The Student Appeals' Policy provides information on how unfair academic decisions are to

be dealt with, and this policy is supported in its implementation through the BP Student Information Centre, through which appeal applications are facilitated and directed in the appropriate channels for processing. In addition, there is a Concerns and Complaints Policy to deal with student and staff issues of a non-academic nature, with a Complaints Officer appointed by the CEO, to ensure consistent implementation of the policy and its associated procedures. This was confirmed to the Panel through student and staff interviews, which also established students' awareness of these policies and processes. The Panel also reviewed samples of students' complaints cases during the site visit and noticed satisfactory management and handling of such cases on the part of BP. In conclusion, the Panel is of the view that, collectively, the policies and processes outlined above, demonstrate strong consideration for the maintenance of academic standards and an emphasis on academic integrity throughout the institution's various activities, which addresses the requirements of this indicator.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 6: Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education [where applicable]

The relationship between the institution operating in Bahrain and other higher education institutions is formalized and explained clearly, so that there is no possibility of students or other stakeholders being misled.

Judgement: Not Applicable

Not Applicable

Recommendation(s)

Not Applicable

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 1: Mission, Governance, and Management

Standard 2

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

There is a robust quality assurance system that ensures the effectiveness of the quality assurance arrangements of the institution as well as the integrity of the institution in all aspects of its academic and administrative operations.

Indicator 7: Quality Assurance

The institution has defined its approach to quality assurance and effectiveness thereof and has quality assurance arrangements in place for managing the quality of all aspects of education provision and administration across the institution.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has a seven-level structure for Quality Assurance (QA) ranging from Royal Decree to procedural guidelines and processes, as was confirmed in interviews with senior management. The management of each level/stage is supported by policies and procedures, as appropriate, which are all available on SharePoint for staff use, as was viewed by the Panel at the site visit. The Directorate for Quality Measurement Analysis and Planning (QMAP) supports all QA activities and is responsible for ensuring that all quality enhancement initiatives are communicated across the Institution. Whereas, the Director of Quality & Standards is a member of the SMT and reports directly to the CEO. This ensures impartiality in decision-making in relation to QA matters. Members of new staff are introduced to the Quality Management System (QMS) as part of their induction to BP and the QMAP organizes ongoing training and development for staff on quality aspects relevant to their role and the changes to existing practices. Interviews with staff demonstrated that they are aware of the QA policies and guidelines and that there is consistency in their use, thus, confirming that there is widespread dissemination of information and a clear understanding of staff members' role in QA.

BP has an established system for internal quality monitoring of academic programmes through the Annual Programme Review (APR), which is guided by relevant policy documents, as was confirmed in interviews with senior management and faculty. This system, monitored by QMAP, allows for continuous quality improvement of programmes and feeds into the curriculum review cycle. A sample of the APR reports was provided to the Panel as supporting evidence. External validation also provides a measure of QA, in addition to surveys, which are widely used to collect and analyse data and are conducted through the QMAP, as was confirmed in interviews with various stakeholders. A sample of completed surveys with related opportunities for improvement were made available to the Panel. Interviews with staff and students indicated their awareness of these surveys, and the Panel was informed that the survey analysis reports, including proposed solutions to areas of concern that have been raised, are sent to the SMT and the Cabinet. Institutional Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and individual actions are also available to all staff on SharePoint and monitored through QMAP by the Projects' Officer. A demonstration of this was provided during the site visit and the Panel was satisfied that it captures all of the necessary actions for quality improvement at an Institutional level. Moreover,

course evaluations and improvement plans are held at faculty level and include survey data from QMAP, internal and external moderator reports, and course results from the registry. A sample of external moderator reports was included and verification of the moderation process was conducted through the Panel's interview with the external moderator. Finally, the structure and function of QMAP as a directorate was evident through the organisational charts.

The Panel found that there is consistent implementation of QA policies and procedures across the Institution, as was confirmed by a review of policy documents, course files and through interviews with members of faculty. Policies and procedures are reviewed at BP on a four-year basis in line with the Policies and Procedures Policy. Their reviews incorporate feedback from stakeholders, as was demonstrated in interviews with internal and external stakeholders. Processes to support the Quality Management System (QMS) at BP are outlined in the Review, Evaluation & Improvement Policy, and are implemented. In conclusion, the Panel finds that, generally, BP has appropriate QA arrangements in place for managing the quality of all aspects of education provision and administration across the Institution and, in particular, appreciates the efforts of BP staff in the quality monitoring processes. Thus, the Panel agrees that the requirements of this indicator are addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 8: Benchmarking and Surveys

Benchmarking and surveys take place on a regular basis; the results of which inform planning, decision-making and enhancement.

Judgement: Addressed

BP recognises the importance of a robust benchmarking process and the contribution this makes to productivity, efficiency, and strengthening of relationships with industries. Despite this and despite the fact that BP has a comprehensive Benchmarking Policy and Framework that is currently in use, the only benchmarking that has taken place so far is either at programme level (e.g. Visual Design) or a benchmarking activity against the industrial sector, to strengthen the link with businesses and industries locally, regionally, and internationally. In addition, there is some evidence pointing toward the benchmarking of the admission criteria and the library; however, the Panel noticed that not only is the benchmarking not at the institutional level but is also only desktop-based and is not consistently applied and documented across faculties. This was confirmed in interviews with senior academic staff and faculty members. The Panel, therefore, recommends that BP should accordingly address this issue of scope and consistency of benchmarking and ensure including all aspects of the Institution. Considering that the limited benchmarking conducted at BP directly feeds back information to the QIPs, the Panel advises the Institution to continue with this practice once it expands the scope of its benchmarking activities, due to this practice's potential to support informed decision-making and enhancement.

In addition to its benchmarking policy and framework, BP has an institutional quality survey framework, which is an information tool for quality improvement, quality assurance, and the monitoring of progress. A set of approved surveys are conducted at different levels of the Institution and are organized by the QMAP Unit in line with the Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy. Surveys include the Student Services Survey, Student Experience Survey, Staff Satisfaction Survey, Library Usage Survey, Graduate Destination Survey, Alumni Survey, and Employer Survey. The results of the conducted surveys are triangulated with other types of data to identify improvement actions that go into the QIP and that inform internal quality monitoring reports. As an example, the results of the student services and student experience surveys and staff survey were provided for the Panel and these showed areas for improvement and actions that have been set against them. From interviews, the Panel noticed that all students and staff are aware of the different surveys being conducted at BP; nevertheless, discussions with various stakeholders revealed that survey findings and related decisions/actions are not always effectively communicated to them, although there is evidence that some actions on identified areas of improvement have had a direct impact in bringing positive changes. Consequently, the Panel recommends that periodic reporting and communication with stakeholders about survey results and related actions and improvements should be ensured at BP. Overall, the Panel considers this indicator as addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Expand the scope of the benchmarking process to include all aspects of the Institution.
- Develop a process of continuously communicating and reporting survey results and their related quality improvement actions to stakeholders.

Indicator 9: Security of Learner Records and Certification

Formalized arrangements are in place to ensure the integrity of learner records and certification which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has two relevant policies to support the effective implementation of the student administration and academic record system. One of the two policies is the Enrolment & Progression policy, which details the procedure for course registration, academic progression, leave of absence, attendance and withdrawals. Whereas, the second one is the Results and Reporting Policy, which details how results should be recorded and reported through the electronic Banner system, which as demonstrated at the site visit, holds information on records and grades. Interviews with staff confirmed that these policies are well communicated across the Institution. Results are usually entered by the faculty and eventually approved in the Academic Board; while, security of records is maintained through daily back-up, restricted access and related staff training. As to students' access to their personal records, this is through a password-protected login, as confirmed through site visit interview sessions. In addition to electronic records, paper copies are required in the case of prospective students, to confirm authenticity

of records. Such records are stored in locked filing cabinets in the Registry, access to which is through a controlled door code, as was noticed during the panel's site visit tour.

Following verification, all summative assessment grades are entered online into Gradebook by the faculty, who have prior approval for access and in line with the Results and Reporting Policy. Checking the accuracy of results and following up on missing marks is performed by the course tutor and course coordinator after each assessment and again at the end of the semester. Despite these security measures, however, the Panel noticed during the site visit tour of the storage area for previous examination papers and scripts, that these documents were stored almost haphazardly in open boxes in a locked room. The Panel recommends therefore that BP should employ more secure and systematic storage methods for past student scripts and examination papers.

Through its Naming and Awarding policy, BP has robust measures in place for completion requirements, issuance and safety of student certificates, including an audit process by the Registry. Once the results are issued, they get approved by the Academic Board, and then the BoT has the authority to approve and award all academic qualifications. As was confirmed during the site visit tour, certificates are issued on special paper with the BP seal applied, which is stored securely in a locked cabinet to maintain integrity of learner parchments; whereas, scanned copies of the certificates are held in a secure drive called the 'M drive'.

In addition, BP has, as part of its QA arrangements, a Policies and Procedures Policy as well as a Review, Evaluation, and Improvement Policy that together provide guidelines for reviewing all aspects of the Institution, whether academic or administrative. Included within these policies are all policy review processes, among them reviews of policies and procedures related to student records, as well as review processes of the Academic Registry. The Registry is in charge of ensuring the integrity of student records and the certification process, and the latest confidential review of it was conducted in 2017, the product of which was the Registry Directorate Internal Audit Report. This report records improvement actions related to student records and certificates, which eventually are fed into the QIP. During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to review this registry audit report and expressed satisfaction with its quality. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Employ a more secure and systematic storage process for past student scripts and examination papers.

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 2: Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Standard 3

Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

The institution has appropriate and sufficient learning resources, ICT and physical infrastructure to function effectively as a HEI, and which support the academic and administrative operations of the institution.

Indicator 10: Learning Resources

The institution provides sustained access to sufficient information and learning resources to achieve its mission and fully support all of its academic programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

BP's mechanism for ensuring the provision of adequate library and learning resource services for its students and staff, comprises a management structure by which the Student Service Directorate, through the Library Learning Centre (LLC), offers a variety of resources and support services, such as the provision and access to books, journals, databases, and online information services. Furthermore, BP has the LLC Committee that is a sub-committee of the Academic Board, which oversees all aspects of library operations and learning services. Having reviewed the terms of reference and the organizational charts of the Student Service Directorate and the LLC, as well as those of the LLC Committee, it became clear to the Panel that the governance and management of the Library is clearly defined. It was also confirmed to the Panel during the interviews that the library staff liaise and regularly meet with faculty members and students to ensure that the LLC meets their needs. In addition, BP stated in the SER, and confirmed during the interviews, that academic staff can request the purchase of library resources through the LLC at any time and that this is then reflected in the LLC yearly Purchasing Plan. The Panel reviewed the 2019 Purchasing Plan and noted how the different ordered items, such as books and databases, were costed, prioritised and scheduled, for delivery throughout the year.

The Panel was informed during the LLC tour that through the 'Deep Knowledge' Portal, BP staff and students can access both on and off-campus the electronic databases to which the Institution has subscribed. Furthermore, the Panel came to know that as soon as new students are enrolled at BP, their data is entered into the Library Management System (Sierra) and they gain access to all LLC resources from the first day of orientation. This was also confirmed to the Panel during the interviews with students and staff, where it was explained that library induction sessions are coordinated by the Student Services Directorate, and LLC staff are involved in them by organizing and conducting informative and relevant presentations related to the services and resources of the LLC. In addition, information relevant to the induction of new staff and students, such as policies, guidelines and course material, are posted for staff on SharePoint and for students on Moodle, to access at any time. In conclusion, the Panel is of the view that, overall, there is a clearly implemented mechanism of provision of adequate library and learning resource services, as highlighted above. However, the Panel was not able to obtain any

evidence that this mechanism is documented in the form of, for example, operational guidelines or policy. As a result, the Panel recommends that BP should address this issue accordingly.

From interviews, the Panel learned that in the academic year 2014-2015, BP conducted a comprehensive mapping (in the form of a Gap Analysis) of the learning resources listed in course descriptors of each faculty, on the one hand, and their availability in the Library Learning Centre on the other. However, the Panel was not able to obtain any evidence of a more recent mapping conducted of the library and learning resources and the current and future learning requirements of the programmes. Consequently, the Panel recommends that BP should map library and learning resources to academic programmes' learning requirements on a regular basis.

On a similar note, BP specified in the SER that in order to identify best practices of effectively allocating library resources, it participates in LIBQUAL survey, which is used internationally to evaluate library services and provision. As mentioned in the SER, BP identified, in the academic year 2013-2014, a total of 24 actions based on LIBQUAL analysis. BP is also a member of the international Special Libraries Association, through which its library staff are kept up-to-date with the latest developments in their field.

Finally, BP administers the QMAP surveys to measure staff and student satisfaction on all matters related to the Institution, including those pertaining to the resources and services provided by the LLC. The Panel learned during the interviews that the findings of these surveys are shared with concerned faculties and centres, including the LLC, and then appropriate actions are taken to address the emerging issues and concerns. For example, based on the results of surveys, an extension of the LLC's opening hours was put into effect, which indicates the institution's responsiveness to stakeholders' feedback and which the Panel views as worthy of appreciation. However, there was no mention in any of the interviews, whether with the students or members of the BPSC or library staff, of LLC survey results and actions being communicated to the students who had participated in the surveys. Accordingly, as was mentioned earlier in the recommendation of Indicator 8, the Panel urges BP to develop its processes of systematically communicating survey results and related quality improvement actions to stakeholders in general, including students. Overall, the Panel considers this indicator as addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Ensure that the mechanism of provision of adequate library and learning resource services is documented either as a policy or in the form of operational guidelines.
- Conduct regular mapping of the library and learning resources to the learning requirements of its various programmes.

Indicator 11: ICT

The institution provides coordinated ICT resources for the effective support of student learning.

Judgement: Addressed

As stated in the SER, the Information and Communication Technology Services (ICTS) Policy identifies the roles and responsibilities for ICT management across the Institution. The ICTS Directorate at BP plans for effective ICT management systems and reporting mechanisms; supports the enhancement of T&L through the use of ICT; ensures effective communication across the Institution; maintains all software, hardware, and network applications; ensures ICT security, risk management, and data protection; handles the troubleshooting of technical problems; and makes recommendations for the hardware/software needed by the different departments. From interviews with various groups, the Panel learned that the operations of the ICTS are overseen by the Deputy CEO for Resources and Information, who regularly holds scheduled bimonthly meetings with the ICTS Director to discuss strategy and operations. The Panel finds the level of interaction between the ICTS and the Deputy CEO satisfactory and effective. The Panel also confirms that the ICT Policy is clear and transparent in outlining the roles and responsibilities of the ICTS and that it is well-communicated through SharePoint for staff members and through Moodle for students.

In addition, the ICTS Directorate has an operational plan that helps in the achievement of BP's strategic goals. This plan is based on requirements identified by the different faculties and directorates of the Institution. As claimed in the SER, one way of measuring the effectiveness of this plan is through the APR process, which involves the evaluation of the ICT services for each programme, and feeds back information related to the effectiveness of the ICTS operational plan. BP also has an active Disaster Recovery Plan approved by the SMT and a Maintenance Plan, which are systematically implemented and reviewed on an annual basis, as was explained to the Panel during the interviews and as per the available evidence. The Panel is satisfied with the different processes of implementation, monitoring, and revision of the various ICTS plans.

With respect to ICT hardware and software, BP has an up-to-date register showing what is available. The Institution also has a set of comprehensive procedures for guaranteeing that ICT services and equipment are both sufficient and fit for purpose. The procedures include a set for managing academic ICT services' requests as well as a set for managing administrative requests. During the site visit tour and interviews with members of staff, the Panel was able to verify that the ICT has sufficient hardware and software; however, it was clear to the Panel that the ICT Department is in need of more technical staff to support students and faculty in their utilization of ICT facilities and services, especially with the types of academic programmes offered by BP, which require heavy reliance on specialized ICT hardware and software. In consequence, the Panel urges BP to address as soon as possible the recommendation mentioned in Indicator 21, which is related to the hiring of more staff to better meet students' and staff needs.

In terms of a Management Information System (MIS), BP uses Banner and employs Moodle as a Learning Management System (LMS). Other systems in place at BP include Mahara, SharePoint, and Argos. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with a SharePoint demonstration and was highly satisfied with how well it is put into use across the Institution. The Panel thus appreciates the effective utilization of SharePoint and its different features. The Panel was also informed that the different management information systems in place at BP are integrated together (e.g. Moodle & Mahara) and that reports are generated from them, which are used to support planning and academic interventions, as indicated in the provided evidence.

Planning and improvements are also supported through the regular monitoring of staff and students' satisfaction in relation to ICT services, as part of several sets of surveys that BP administers to evaluate the effectiveness and adequacy of its resources and support services. Interviews with various stakeholders confirmed to the Panel that BP has responded to the outcomes of these surveys. For example, strengthening of the wireless network; and the replacement of old computers are two improvement actions that were implemented based on survey results. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 12: Infrastructure

The institution provides physical infrastructure that is safe and demonstrably adequate for the conduct of its academic programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

The SER claims that BP maintains an up-to-date register of the utilization of its physical infrastructure, including classrooms, tutorial space, library resources and laboratories. BP also claims that it has a register of laboratory space, held by the Facilities Directorate, which shows current location, planned new location and move date, and current status. Nevertheless, the Panel was not provided with such registers, despite requesting them to be provided as extra evidence. The only evidence that was provided in this respect was a timetable of classes scheduled in the ICT laboratories and a preventive maintenance plan from the Maintenance Department. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that BP should develop and maintain up-to-date registers for its physical infrastructure and equipment's provision and utilization. However, the site visit tour and interviews confirmed to the Panel that BP has well-equipped and adequate number of classrooms, laboratories, workshops and seminar rooms for its current student numbers, and it has short-term plans to increase teaching space, for example by building additional floors and increasing the number of Engineering laboratories.

In terms of health and safety, BP has an Occupational Health and Safety Department and Health & Safety Committee (OSH Committee) and three related policies, which are: Health and Safety Policy, a Smoke Free Policy and a Campus Security Policy. These policies are operated through a Health and Safety Officer within the Occupational Health and Safety Department, which monitors safety across a range of areas. The Panel reviewed the policies and terms of reference of the OSH Committee and concludes that they are clear, aligned with Bahraini law, and up-to date. Furthermore, the Panel was informed during interviews with staff and students, that the policies and processes for occupational health and safety are adhered to and effective.

Finally, BP regularly evaluates its staff and students' satisfaction with the quality of its campus' infrastructure, as a part of other surveys that include items on facilities and equipment (e.g. Student Experiences Survey; Student Services Survey; Staff Satisfaction Survey). Like the case of ICT, the APR

process, which involves an evaluation of the infrastructure available to support each programme, feeds back information related to the fitness for purpose and effectiveness of BP's infrastructure in general. All review and survey results are reported upon analysis to the SMT, where related improvement actions are added to the QIP. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Develop and maintain up-to-date registers showing provision and utilization of its physical infrastructure.

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 3: Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

Standard 4

The Quality of Teaching and Learning

The institution has a comprehensive academic planning system with a clear management structure and processes in place to ensure the quality of the teaching and learning programmes and their delivery.

Indicator 13: Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes

There are effective mechanisms to ensure the quality of teaching and learning provision across the institution.

Judgement: Addressed

According to the SER, BP has a T&L Philosophy that is reflected in a specific document consisting of a set of T&L principles. This document includes the main educational strategies adopted by the Institution such as: Problem-Based Learning (PBL), project-based learning, student-centred learning, collaborative and lifelong learning. The T&L philosophy is published on the BP website and the Panel is of the view that its related strategies are appropriate for BP's mission.

In addition, BP has an implementation plan for its T&L strategy and the Programme Approval Document (PAD) demonstrates the ways of implementation of the T&L philosophy in different programmes. To ensure effective implementation, BP conducts meetings, a staff induction programme, and a biannual T&L symposium. The Panel was informed in faculty interviews that there is regular training on the T&L strategies adopted by BP. As indicated in the SER and in the PAD, BP monitors and reviews the implementation and effectiveness of its T&L strategies through the APR and the external validation processes. Also, meetings with senior management confirmed that the T&L strategy implementation is monitored through continuous observation and feedback.

BP has an organizational chart that shows those responsible for the management of the academic programmes across the Institution. Also, the CSB approved generic job descriptions stipulate the responsibilities of those accountable for the management of academic programmes, through the structure of the different committees and boards with their associated terms of reference (e.g. Programme Committee, Faculty Board, Academic Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Board and the SMT). Moreover, as indicated in the SER, all academic policies include the relevant roles and responsibilities for the management of academic programmes. Job descriptions of programme managers are also included among others in the job description document for all BP staff.

BP has a T&L policy that includes guidelines for students and teaching staff. According to the SER, this policy provides a unified approach to T&L for all faculties, schools, departments and services. It also provides guidance related to the T&L methods selected, the teaching observation programme, academic staff mentoring, and the use of e-learning *via* Moodle. The guidance provided by this policy was also confirmed in interviews with senior management and faculty members. The Panel learned that this policy is to be reviewed every four years; however, since it was approved only in September 2016, no review of it has been conducted yet.

Additionally, BP has a policy for Work-Based Learning (WBL) entailing offsite and workplace learning activities. The policy includes the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between BP and the industry partners. The guidelines of the MoU state that there should be clearly-defined responsibilities of the host organization and of BP. The provided documents of WBL demonstrate that seven academic programmes are applying this type of learning. Samples of students' WBL files including relevant tasks, reports and presentations, in addition to examples of academic and supervisors' assessment sheets were provided to the Panel, which the Panel found to be satisfactory. In meetings with students, they indicated that they have WBL during their programme or in their final year. They added that supervisors from their faculties and from the workplace monitor and assess their WBL work. The Panel heard from senior management that each programme has its own approach to implementation. Also, there is no unified system across the faculties to regularly monitor the students' WBL experience and there is no structured mechanism for improvement. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that BP develops a unified mechanism or system for monitoring WBL across the Institution. Nevertheless, the Panel appreciates BP's strong industrial links and the employability rate of its graduates.

With respect to the review of the T&L implemented practices at BP, this is conducted through the teacher observation process, to mainly determine the extent and effectiveness of the implementation of the key T&L methodology of the Institution, which is the PBL. Interviews with faculty clarified that the teaching observations are conducted by peers and also by the PBL specialist of each programme. There is a PBL Steering Committee in place, which has recently been established formally and its primary purpose is to monitor how PBL is being implemented across the Polytechnic, especially since each programme differs in PBL implementation despite common practices. Feedback from this committee is fed to the Quality Assurance Unit for improvement planning. Input from student experience surveys as well as alumni surveys in relation to the effectiveness of T&L methods in general, including WBL, is also used in the review process of implemented T&L practices at BP. The Panel appreciates that the T&L methods employed across the Institution from PBL to project-based learning and collaborative learning encourage critical thinking and independent learning. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Develop a unified and structured mechanism to be applied across faculties for monitoring the students' work-based learning experience and make improvements accordingly.

Indicator 14: Admissions

The institution has appropriate and rigorously enforced admission criteria for all its programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

As mentioned in the SER, BP has a student admission policy, which includes the general entry admission criteria. Whereas, the specific admission criteria for each programme are included in the PAD documents. The SER also states that the BP website has up-to-date information about the academic programmes, admission criteria, language requirements, attendance requirements and academic

integrity considerations, which was verified by the Panel. This information is available for prospective and current students, the wider community and other stakeholders. In addition, BP has a Credit Recognition and Exemption Policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and transfer students intending to apply to BP. This policy states that transferring credits to equivalent BP programmes is only possible for credits achieved at institutions recognized by the HEC of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

As indicated in the SER, the admission criteria for entry into specific disciplines are in accordance with local and international norms for the disciplines. English entry standards are benchmarked against the Common European Framework for Referencing Languages (CEFR). In 2013, the CEFR-linked Oxford-on-line English entry examination was introduced to provide objective and benchmarked data. As noted in the SER, a UK-based mathematics entry on-line examination is currently in operation. However, the related document states that, 'rather than aligning to local and international standards which may not reflect the requirements of the various programmes, BP has analysed the specific skills required for success in each programme and customised entry requirements', which indicates that the measurement of knowledge competencies related to some subjects, other than English and mathematics, may not be fully aligned with international norms of the discipline. Hence, the Panel recommends that BP align the knowledge competencies related to subjects, other than English and mathematics, with international norms of the disciplines.

As mentioned in the SER and as indicated in the T&L policy, the official language of instruction at BP is English, with the exception of the Arabic course, which is a national requirement. Interviews with senior management and faculty clarified that to enter into the degree programmes, student applicants need a score of B2 in the CEFR examination; whereas a score of B1 qualifies them into BP's Foundation Programme. As indicated in the SER, the Foundation Programme prepares the students to meet the entry requirements for their specified undergraduate degrees. This preparatory programme consists mainly of English and mathematics courses, with an E-portfolio course for students entering the Visual Design undergraduate programme and additional mathematics courses for students entering ICT or Engineering programmes. As confirmed in interviews with faculty, the Foundation Programme is supported by a writing centre that helps its students with academic writing. In addition to writing skills, however, the programme focuses on enhancing students' critical thinking, ICT skills, and study skills. This programme is reviewed for effectiveness and fitness for purpose reasons and the last two reviews of it in the academic years 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 reported high rates of student retention in it.

On the same note, a regular review is conducted of the English language admission criteria. This review is carried out by the Deans and Foundation Head of School, with its outcomes then being approved by the Academic Board. Evidence of reviewing the admission criteria is provided in the English language review of April 2018, in which a recommendation was made to link curricula and entry testing to CEFR levels, so as to provide international benchmarking. Also, evidence is available through the 2014 review of the Online Mathematics Entry Test Working Group, which recommended the review of the Mathematics Entry Test in terms of validity, reliability and security. As gathered from the interviews with admission staff, the review of admission criteria takes place at the beginning of each academic year for both English and mathematics. However, the Admission Policy states that the review of the admission criteria is to be conducted 'regularly', without specifying a fixed time period for this review. Evidence also clearly states that the Foundation Programme review is not done on a yearly basis, with no indication of any specific timeframe for this review. The Panel is of the view that BP could benefit

from admission criteria and Foundation Programme reviews that fall within a defined and fixed time schedule and based on international comparisons. As a result, the Panel recommends that BP should specify a fixed time period for such reviews. Generally, the Panel is satisfied with the appropriateness and rigour of the institution's admission criteria and finds this indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Align the knowledge competencies of entry tests related to subjects, other than English and mathematics, with international norms of the disciplines.
- Define a fixed time period to review the admission criteria along with the foundation programme, while using information on student outcomes and international comparisons.

Indicator 15: Introduction and Review of Programmes

The institution has rigorous systems and processes for the development and approval of new programmes - that includes appropriate infrastructure - and for the review of existing programmes to ensure sound academic standards are met. These requirements are applied consistently, regularly monitored and reviewed.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has mechanisms for ensuring that its academic programmes and related curricula are fit for purpose and up-to-date. These mechanisms are embodied in regular reviews of the performance, quality, relevance and effectiveness of the academic programmes across the Institution and the planning and implementation of corrective actions accordingly, as detailed in BP's Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy. In addition to these reviews, the PAD for each programme includes qualifications, alignment to strategic goals, Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), progression routes and other specific requirements. Interviews with senior management indicated that the regular programme reviews take into consideration not only labour market needs but also changes in the labour market, and rely in that on advice provided by the Curriculum Advisory Groups of the different programmes. An examination of evidence related to the work of the advisory groups (e.g. meeting minutes), confirmed to the Panel that the advice provided focuses on ensuring that programmes are relevant to the labour market needs and reflect current trends in the discipline. Interviews with representatives of the advisory groups revealed some examples of recommendations made by these groups in relation to topics of relevance to the labour market and the positive response of the faculties to them. The Panel was also informed that BP is trying to recruit faculty members that are involved in industry, so as to be more labour market oriented. Finally, as noted in the SER, another way for ensuring relevance and fitness of purpose of BP's academic programmes is through the APR, where analyses of graduate and employer satisfaction survey results and curriculum advisory groups' feedback help identify areas for improvement, which are added to the QIP.

In addition, BP has mechanisms for ensuring that its qualifications are in accordance with the NQF requirements and international norms. Based on the SER, BP adheres to the NQF requirements for credit distribution, mapping and confirmation, as stated in the Programme Approval Policy. There is also a

procedure for placement of qualifications on the NQF. During the site visit, BP indicated that all 20 programmes submitted to the BQA have been placed on the NQF register, and this was highlighted as an indicator of effective implementation of programme approvals and implementation arrangements. As for international norms, the Panel learned that BP uses international industry accreditation guidelines of several professions as international norms (e.g. in Accounting), which can be matched with different programmes' qualifications. Also, a document was provided during the site visit that indicates that BP's levels of qualifications are similar to both the New Zealand NQF and to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. The Panel viewed a sample of awarded academic certificates and transcripts and verified that, in accordance with the Naming and Awarding Qualifications Policy, they clearly state the NQF level and credits on them in addition to other items.

The BP Programme Approval Policy includes procedures for the development of new programmes. This policy indicates that a plan should be approved by the BoT for any proposed programme. As noted in the SER, this plan includes the required resources and teaching staff. This was confirmed in the BoT interview session. Moreover, the T&L Policy sets out the T&L methods that will be applied in the new programme, whether online, blended, project-based or work-based learning. As for the relevant PAD for the newly-developed programme, it states the professional accreditations, where applicable. It also includes the mapping of PILOs to Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs). Furthermore, the Human Resources Policy indicates the newly-developed programme requirements in terms of qualified teaching staff and their number. All qualifications of academic staff members are posted on the BP website. The Panel was reassured from interviews with faculty members that they are fully aware of the steps and procedures required to develop a new programme. The Panel also had the chance to examine as evidence documents related to newly-developed programmes at BP. In light of the above, the Panel appreciates the robust system in place for the development of new academic programmes within BP.

As per the Review, Evaluation and Improvement Policy of BP, there are formal procedures for internal and external programme reviews. The internal reviews include the APR and the periodic review. The APR concentrates on staff, research, moderation reports, students' results/grades, retention data, graduate employment and success, constraints and risks to the programme. This is in addition to the course reviews which are sub-components of the APR. Whereas, the periodic review covers all aspects of a programme and is conducted every five years, as was confirmed in interviews with Heads of Schools. As for the external review, it includes external programme monitoring and validation processes and all programmes are externally validated by a team of external academics and industry experts. This was verified by the Panel during the site visit through an examination of a sample of external validation reports. The provided review reports confirm that the external programme review is conducted by experienced external educators who make recommendations on content, resources, currency and relevance of the curriculum and advise on external accreditation requirements. However, the timespan of these external reviews was not made clear and the SER identified as an area of improvement the conducting of such reviews for all programmes 'on a regular schedule' without defining what exactly is meant by 'regular'. The Panel therefore advises BP to be clearer on the timespans of all types of reviews carried out across the Institution. Nonetheless, actions arising from the analyses of the results of these external reviews are added to the QIP. Senior management confirmed to the Panel the comprehensive nature of the internal and external review process of programmes and

explained that the results of the programme reviews together with the Curriculum Advisory Group feedback are analysed and a quality improvement action plan is developed accordingly. Overall, the Panel is satisfied with the institution's systems and processes for developing, approving, and reviewing academic programmes and finds this indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 16: Student Assessment and Moderation

There are implemented transparent assessment policies and procedures including moderation. Assessment of student learning is appropriate and accurately reflects the learning outcomes and academic standards achieved by students.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has an Assessment and Moderation Policy, which includes assessment procedures, practices, assessment code of practice, moderation procedures and assessment and moderation guidelines. As mentioned in the SER, the policy is made available to teaching staff on SharePoint, and to students through Moodle. The Student Handbook also includes a summary of the assessment information, as was additionally confirmed to the Panel in interviews with faculty members and students. The assessment policy was last reviewed in 2014 and currently exists in its second version. The SER claims that this policy is systematically implemented across the Institution as evidenced by the several committees' approvals required for the assessment processes. In consequence, the Panel examined minutes of committees' meetings provided as evidence and confirmed the several levels of approvals that the assessment processes go through. In addition, the Panel was informed by senior management that the Curriculum Development Unit is responsible for the systematic implementation of the assessment policy across faculties. The Panel considers these measures for ensuring systematic implementation of the assessment and moderation policy satisfactory.

Assessment is a part of the staff development opportunities at BP. Assessment topics that staff have been provided training on at BP include: the writing of course intended learning outcomes and their alignment with assessment tasks; design of appropriate assessment tools; rubric design; moderation of assessments. As indicated in the SER, BP's staff development opportunities are based on training needs and all staff have to attend training in different areas of T&L, including assessment. As for newly-appointed teaching staff, all are required to participate in a tertiary T&L certificate programme, the Certificate of Tertiary Teaching & Learning (CTTL), managed by the School of Foundation Studies, which includes sessions on assessment and moderation. The sessions include the development of assessment tasks that appropriately measure CILOs and PILOs, designing rubrics, and moderation practices. According to the SER, this programme is aligned with the United Kingdom's Professional Standards Framework. Also, it is noted in the SER that in the last four years, 163 staff members completed the CTTL programme. In interviews, teaching staff expressed their high satisfaction with the training opportunities provided by the Institution, as was evident also in the results of the electronic

satisfaction surveys conducted by the T&L Unit. The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by the Institution through the CTTL to develop faculty members' competencies in relation to designing assessments and measuring Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

As indicated in the submitted policy on assessment and moderation, BP has procedures that govern internal and external moderation. The policy also includes guidelines on academic integrity and roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders who are involved in the moderation process. The contract template for an external moderation service agreement also includes responsibilities of the external moderators. The assessment and moderation policy specifies criteria for selecting internal moderators such as moderators' impartiality of judgement, experience of assessment and moderation, knowledge of the course, and subject expertise. There are also criteria for the selection of institutions that provide external moderation and monitoring services, and the provided document relating to the guiding criteria for the selection of institutions that provide external examination services includes some criteria for selecting external moderators; however, this document is not dated.

Examples of external moderation reports and responses were provided to the Panel during the site visit. From them and from interviews with several stakeholders, the Panel noticed that although there is a policy and guidelines for external moderation, only a small number of programmes have external moderators. In the meeting with senior management, it was indicated that this problem is due to recent BP financial constraints. In addition, the provided document of the monitoring report of an external moderator included some recommendations such as: the need for conducting formal pre-moderation, the need for second marking and other comments, which were not responded to or implemented. This was further confirmed in the external moderators' meeting. Consequently, as a result of the Panel's observations with respect to external moderation, the Panel recommends that BP should ensure that there are external moderators for all its programmes and should take their recommendations into serious consideration and respond to them accordingly.

The SER claims that based on the provided document of the Student Academic Appeals Policy, BP has a clear and transparent grade appeals process. The interview with the senior management members confirmed this also. According to the policy, the appeals are discussed in the Faculty Appeal Committees and the CEO Appeals Committee. Upon examination of the appeals policy, the Panel concluded that it clearly explains the appeals process and the expectations for the students to be aware of their academic appeal rights as well as their responsibilities. The policy also states that appeal submission should be accompanied with supporting evidence, within deadlines, and according to stated criteria. Through interviews, the Panel learned that the BP registry sends emails to all students describing the appeals' process and the SER mentions that in the Foundation programme, students are informed about appeals during orientation through the LMS. A summary of appeal procedures is also included in the Student Handbook. The Panel had the opportunity to ask the students about the appeals process and the general feedback reported was that BP is effectively responsive to their appeal requests. This was also evident to the Panel members through an examination of a sample of appeal cases and actions taken in response, which was provided to them as evidence.

BP implements a process for detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct through different mechanisms. The Academic Integrity and Honesty Policy includes standards of academic integrity and honesty in teaching, learning, assessment, and the conduct of research. This policy has a procedure for

the actions that should be taken for processing and improving practice related to academic misconduct. As noted in the SER, to consistently apply this approach across the Institution, guidelines including definitions and examples of academic misconduct and recommended penalties are provided in different policies such as the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy and the Assessment and Moderation Policy. Students are also made aware of the BP plagiarism policy and other forms of academic misconduct through the Student Handbook, and ensuring consistency of approach toward plagiarism is included in the responsibilities of the Faculties and Schools. During the site visit, the Panel examined a sample of plagiarism cases and actions taken in response and found them to be satisfactory. In addition, during interviews, faculty members and students demonstrated good knowledge and awareness of the plagiarism policy and its application. However, the Panel was informed that some instructors allow the students to use the plagiarism detection software Turnitin before submission of their work while others do not permit this. As a result, the Panel recommends that BP should ensure consistency of practices in relation to implementation when it comes to plagiarism detection. Considering the aforementioned, the Panel finds that on balance the assessment and moderation policies at BP are appropriately implemented and well-aligned with ILOs and academic standards. This indicator is therefore addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Expand the scope of implementation of external moderation for all its offered programmes and address moderators' recommendations.
- Ensure consistent implementation of practices related to the use of the plagiarism-detection software.

Indicator 17: The Learning Outcomes

The institution ensures that all programmes and courses have clearly formulated learning outcomes and there are effective mechanisms to ensure that graduates achieve the learning outcomes of the programmes.

Judgement: Addressed

According to the SER, the implementation of the programme approval procedures and the fulfilment of NQF requirements ensure the clear formulation of ILOs, whether those of programmes or of courses. In interview sessions, the senior management described to the Panel the steps followed for ensuring the clear formulation of PILOs and CILOs and their regular review, which is done conjointly by the Curriculum Development Committee and the subject area experts. This is followed by a review and approval from the AQAC. Through an examination of a sample of course files, the Panel confirmed the claim made in the SER that BP has clearly formulated CILOs that are aligned to the formulated PILOs. The mapping of CILOs to PILOs is also depicted in the PAD of every qualification/programme.

The SER explains that BP ensures the achievement of the graduate attributes and learning outcomes through the final year industry projects included in the PAD. These projects are presented to different stakeholders who provide feedback and determine that graduate attributes and PILOs have been met.

The Panel was informed by senior management that achievement of the graduate attributes and learning outcomes is ensured through the matrix of specifications as well as the employers who evaluate the students' final year industry projects.

BP provides opportunities for students to exit from programmes at a certain level based on award type, the number of credits completed, and exit time. As noted in the SER and explained in staff interviews, each PAD has the information about the relevant exit awards. The policy titled 'Naming and Awarding Qualifications' has a section about exit qualifications and the conditions for re-admission to BP if the students wish to be awarded with the higher qualification of the same programme. Whereas, the BP policy for results and reporting describes the process for submitting learners' data and results for certification. The policy includes guidelines and rules for accurate and timely reporting and approvals of the summative course assessment results, any grade amendments, and also the students who will be eligible for graduation or for academic excellence awards. According to the SER, the approval process of students' results is completed by the Programme Committee, Faculty Board and the Academic Board. The Panel was informed that colleges/schools also provide graph summaries and courses of concern to the Academic Board for discussion and suggested actions. After Academic Board approval, students' final grades are updated in the MIS and their release dates to students are announced on the BP website. In all this, the Registrar has the responsibility of ensuring that grades are recorded for all courses in which students are enrolled. The Panel attended a demonstration on how the grades are recorded during the site visit and found the process clear and sound.

With respect to students' progression, BP's policy of Enrolment and Academic Progression includes the procedure for tracking students' progress. As noted in the SER and as indicated in the policy document, students' academic progress is assessed at the end of each semester after approval of grades by the Academic Board. Also, as noted in the policy, students' academic standing/status helps identify the academically at-risk students and enables their support. After identification of academic standing, this is reported to students and Faculty on Banner and a list of students on academic probation/exclusion is provided to the Faculties. A sample of academic probation/exclusion of students in the last three years was provided to the Panel during the site visit for examination. In addition, interviews with students, faculty members, and senior management focused in part on eliciting information about the process of identifying and supporting academically at-risk students, and the Panel found, as a result, that BP has a clear and well-understood process of identifying such students with an appropriate provision of related support.

Finally, in relation to the benchmarking of ILOs, the SER mentions several institutional documents that describe the benchmarking process at BP. These documents include the Benchmarking Framework, the Benchmarking Policy, the Programme Approval Policy, and the NQF requirements. The SER also mentions that ILOs are benchmarked at the development stage through a comparison with other ILOs from similar programmes. However, in the benchmarking report provided as evidence, the Panel noticed that the benchmarked aspects did not include ILOs. Also, there was no data about local, regional or international benchmarks. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BP should ensure that it benchmarks the equivalence of ILOs against other standards. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the intended learning outcomes are clearly-formulated, and BP has effective mechanisms to ensure their achievement, which makes the requirements of the indicator satisfied.

Recommendation(s)

- Use benchmarks and/or external reference points to verify the equivalence of learning outcomes of BP programmes.

Indicator 18: Recognition of Prior Learning (where applicable and legislation permits)

The institution has a recognition of prior learning policy, and effective procedures for recognizing prior learning and assessing current competencies.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has a policy and procedures for recognition of prior formal learning. According to this policy, the prior learning should be obtained from institutions recognised by the HEC or another appropriate authority. As noted in the SER, the credit recognition policy was reviewed in 2017, with the aim of clarifying the credit recognition and exemption process. Samples of RPL cases in different programmes were provided to the Panel as evidence. Upon examination of these samples, the Panel concluded that the RPL policy and procedures are clear and satisfactorily implemented across the Institution. However, since the assessment of RPL is conducted by staff who are not experts in the content area and in assessment, the Panel finds that the provision of relevant continuous PD opportunities to faculty members could be useful. At the present, such formal training opportunities in RPL are not available, as clearly mentioned in the document, which was submitted to the Panel as evidence during the site visit. The only RPL training provided is on an individual level, based on the request of the curriculum advisors, with the sequential steps required in a credit recognition application being available to all staff in the Credit Recognition Policy on SharePoint. In light of this, the Panel encourages BP to provide formal training for faculty members in the area of RPL assessment.

As for the work conducted by the appointed RPL assessors, faculty explained in interviews that they evaluate evidence provided against the course descriptor, as described in the policy assessment guidelines. These guidelines indicate that assessment should be in accordance with the procedures and regulations of the Assessment and Moderation Policy, so as to be relevant to BP assessment principles and CILOs. While, in terms of the procedures followed in RPL and the assessment tools utilized, BP has an application form for recognition of prior learning. This form is embedded in the Credit Recognition and Exemption Policy, which has sections related to prior learning, including verification and assessment, results, review, and appeals. As for recording RPL assessment applications and admission, the MIS Banner is used. This system is managed and updated by the Registry. In conclusion, the Panel finds through the provided samples of new applications for credit recognition and the actions following them, that the RPL recognition process is clear and in accordance with BP's policies on fair and transparent assessment. This indicator is therefore satisfied.

Recommendation(s)

None

Indicator 19: Short courses

The institution has effective systems in place for the management of its short courses (where applicable).

Judgement: Not applicable

Since short courses at BP are still in the developmental state, as evidenced from the SER, documents and meetings with different stakeholders, this indicator can be considered as non-applicable.

Recommendation(s)

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 4: Teaching and Learning

Standard 5

Student Support Services

The institution has an efficient and effective student administration and academic support services.

Indicator 20: Student Support

The institution provides efficient and effective student administration and academic support services, and encourages the personal development of students.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has a range of support services for students, including those with special academic and/or physical needs. These support services are set out in the Student Services Policy, which focuses on students' academic, health, recreational, administrative and logistical support, and are provided by a number of centres, such as: the LLC, Registry, Career and Employment Centre, Health and Wellness Centre, and Academic Skills Centre. During its tour of the BP campus, the Panel visited these centres and found them well-run and fully-equipped, with the exception of the medical clinic which is currently not staffed. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with these services and confirmed that there was also in addition, counselling support provided for those who need it. This was also mentioned in interviews with members of staff who additionally reported that students are inducted to the support services upon enrolment. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the student support services offered by BP are adequate, with the exception of the medical clinic which lacks support staff. In relation to this, the Panel was informed that efforts are being made by BP management and the HR Department to recruit a nurse and that, meanwhile, Security Guards at BP have been trained to deal with any student medical emergencies and to offer them first aid.

From interviews with students and staff, the Panel learned that the students' support services are adjusted for students with special needs and, as indicated in the SER, and outlined in the Student Support Policy, the students are requested to declare any known disability when first applying to the Polytechnic. This information is recorded in the Registry's Banner system and forwarded to the Nurse and Learning Support Specialist, who will follow up with the newly-admitted students in their first semester of study to clarify their situation and needs. However, with the lack of a nurse at the present, and also in the absence of a Learning Support Specialist, it is not quite clear who is currently fulfilling this role. The Panel therefore urges BP to address the overarching recommendation of Indicator 21 in relation to the hiring of more staff, in order to ensure availability of a nurse at its health clinic and a Learning Support Specialist to help in supporting students' relevant needs. Nevertheless, the BP counsellor arranges meetings with such students at the beginning of each semester and then follows up their progress, to ensure adequate provision of support throughout their programme of study. This was confirmed during the Panel interviews with staff and students. As an improvement action, BP has identified, as outlined in the SER and confirmed during interviews, the need to recruit a 'Learning Support Specialist', and the Panel supports this intention.

As mentioned in the SER, administrative information is provided to applicants and enrolled students at BP through the following policies: Student Admission Policy, Enrolment and Academic Progression Policy, and Results and Reporting Policy. These policies were reviewed by the Panel and found to be clear and up-to-date. The Panel also noticed that enrolment of students and course registration information is included on the BP website; while, information related to class commencement, drop/add, and fee-due dates are placed on the Academic Calendar, which is available to students and staff on the website. This was verified by the Panel by viewing the website and during the interviews with the students. With respect to information pertaining to students' results and grades, the Panel was informed that upon results' approval by the Academic Board, students receive an email about the grades' issuance and then, as a result, can access their grades and transcripts online through Banner. This email also includes information about the academic standing rules and the process of appeals.

In relation to extracurricular activities, BP encourages students and provides them with opportunities to engage in social, recreational, community and cultural pursuits, such as participating in conferences, clubs, sport activities and competitions, as outlined in the Student Services Policy. The Panel learned during the site visit interviews, that BPSC members and the Student Affairs Department support and advise students in making the most of these events and activities. In addition, during its tour around BP campus, the Panel was able to visit the Activities Hall and was informed that it is available for use by all BP students in their free times, where they can enjoy sports and recreational activities, such as: table-tennis, foosball, pool/snooker, carrom, and watching television. Interviews with students revealed to the Panel a general satisfaction with the social time spent in the Activities Hall, as well as satisfaction, with extracurricular activities in general. Interviews also indicated that student voice is also heard with respect to improvements needed in relation to extracurriculars; as, based on student feedback, a decision was taken in the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019 to dedicate one day a week as a 'females only' day in the Activities Hall. The Panel appreciates this inclusive approach of the BP toward extracurriculars and student life, in general, and appreciates the wide range of activities alongside their academic studies. Despite this, however, the Panel finds that greater and more effective student participation in community engagement initiatives is still needed, as will be elaborated in Standard 8.

In terms of students at risk of academic failure, BP has two guiding policies: the Enrolment and Academic Progression Policy and the Student Support Policy. The former provides information about how academic progress is measured and the latter keeps students abreast of what learning support services are available to them. On review of these policies, the Panel found them clear and up-to-date. At BP, students are considered at risk if their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) falls below 2.25. The SER explains that such students, along with those who are on academic probation, receive in the beginning of the semester an email to meet with the Student Counsellor, so as to discuss learning progress and ways to succeed. Each faculty member also can refer academically struggling students to the Counselor or to the LLC or to the Academic Skills Centre for support. Overall, the Panel finds that BP has a clear and effective mechanism of identifying and supporting academically at-risk students.

In addition to the support provided to at-risk students, BP has Academic Advising and Mentoring Services for all students, which are clearly explained in the Student Support Policy. The aim of these services is to help students make wise choices and decisions when it comes to their learning. Both the Foundation as well as the Degree programmes offer advising to their students through the tutorial support sessions scheduled by appointment with the Academic Skills Centre. Students also have access

to their tutors independently. From interviews with staff from the Academic Skills Centre, the Panel learned that the Centre dealt with 389 appointments during the academic year 2017-2018 with students from different programmes. The services provided by the Centre were evaluated through an internal survey in 2018, which led through the analysis of its results to improvements in the Centre's services.

Looking at BP's student support services, in general, the Panel noticed that BP regularly evaluates them through its main student satisfaction surveys: The Student Services Survey and the Student Experiences Survey. Both surveys are conducted in the second semester of every year by the QMAP. The difference between the two is that the former one 'measures the students' perceptions and satisfaction regarding all the services offered to them by the Institution, e.g. Academic Advising, Library Learning Centre, Facilities, Registry, Student Council and IT elements'; while, the latter 'measures students' perceptions and satisfaction regarding overall experience at BP, e.g. quality of teaching, infrastructure, students' services and support, facilities, Registry and staff performance'. Results of these surveys are analysed and then submitted to the Directors of Registry and Student Services to be forwarded to relevant staff, among them the QA Director, for improvement planning purposes and reporting to the SMT. In conclusion, the Panel members are satisfied with the support services provided by the Institution and thus consider this indicator as addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 5: Student Support Services

Standard 6

Human Resources Management

The institution has appropriate human resource policies and procedures including staff development in place that demonstrably support and enhance the various operational activities of the institution.

Indicator 21: Human Resources

The institution employs human resources that are sufficient in number and appropriately qualified to achieve the mission and to provide good quality higher education.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has a Human Resources Management Policy that sets out the internal procedures on the implementation of the HR strategy. This policy is in line with the requirements and regulations of the CSB. However, it is the expectation that with the recent Royal Decree, which establishes BP as an independent entity, the Institution will soon be able to develop its own HR policies independently of the CSB. At the present, the HR Directorate at BP oversees the responsibility for implementing all aspects touched upon in this policy, from staff recruitment and induction to appraisals, promotions, HR development, and HR operations. BP also has a yearly recruitment plan that is approved by the institution's Recruitment Committee, which also has the responsibility of ensuring the credibility of the interview process and shortlisting submitted applications.

With respect to the induction of new recruits, this is obligatory for all staff members, as per BP's Human Resources Management Policy. In this induction, general topics pertinent to the Institution as a whole are covered, including: the vision, mission and values; strategic plan; health and safety. In addition, BP organizes a second type of induction for academic staff, in particular. This induction is stipulated in the institution's T&L Policy and is carried out during academic staff members' first year of service. This academic induction focuses on the T&L philosophy and practices implemented at the Institution in the mandatory CTTL programme offered to faculty members. Interviews with staff confirmed that the induction sessions are evaluated for their effectiveness by all staff members through a specific form that they fill out on SharePoint, and the evaluation results are analysed and sent to the relevant departments for improvement planning.

Before recruitment of new staff members, BP ensures that all their qualifications and experience are appropriate for the positions they are to fill, and on a yearly basis its Human Resource Operation Section requests all hired staff members to update any new qualifications they have acquired. Accordingly, their files and qualifications are then amended on the Human Resources Database. From interviews with faculty members and based on a review of their CVs and profiles, the Panel concluded that they are appropriately qualified for the type of provision at BP and that together they create a workforce characterized by commitment and enthusiasm, which is appreciated by the Panel.

Once recruited, academic staff members' workload allocation and time for research and other related scholarly activities are managed based on the Workload Procedure. Interviews with Heads of Schools

confirmed that while the workload policy states that the faculty workload is 15-16 minimum hours and a maximum of 20 hours per week, there happen to be workload arrangements that differ from school to school based on special assignments/projects sometimes consigned to them (e.g. coordination of industry-based research projects). However, the procedure implemented is that in the beginning of each semester, a workload sheet is completed for each faculty member and approved by the Dean, before it is submitted to the HR Directorate for verification and analysis. Nonetheless, having reviewed the available evidence in the form of workload sheets and assignment information, and based on interviews of senior management and staff, it became clear to the Panel that BP is in general understaffed and especially in terms of academic support. For this reason, the Panel recommends that BP should improve and scale up its staffing levels, especially in areas such as the Library, the ICT Department and Student Support Services (e.g. nurse and Learning Support Specialist) (see Indicators 2, 11 & 20).

In relation to staff complaints and grievances, the process that is followed at BP to address such issues is regulated by the Grievance Committee through the Staff Grievance Procedure and the 'Raising and Resolution of Staff Complaints' Procedure. Interviews with HR staff confirmed that any conflicts that arise between staff members are approached in a collegial manner and if they do not get resolved in that way, then there are disciplinary actions that are taken. Having reviewed the process in place for staff complaints and grievances, the Panel concludes that it is clear and fairly applied. Similarly, interviews with HR staff also indicated that there is general satisfaction with the effectiveness of this process, which is deduced from the results of satisfaction surveys distributed regularly to the administrative and academic staff. In particular, BP conducts a staff satisfaction survey every year and its results get forwarded to the HR Directorate and the CEO, who then shares these results with the staff, for action by the relevant departments. In addition, BP conducts exit interviews for leaving staff and requires them to fill out exit forms, so as to elicit information about their reasons for leaving and about potential areas of concern at BP. Overall, the Panel finds this indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Improve and scale up its staffing levels, especially in areas such as the Library, the ICT Department and Student Support Services (e.g. nurse and Learning Support Specialist).

Indicator 22: Staff Development

The institution has a systematic approach to staff development and provides opportunities for all staff to remain up-to-date in their areas of teaching, research and administration.

Judgement: Addressed

The Academic Development Directorate (ADD) of BP has as a part of its responsibilities the overseeing of academics' Professional Development (PD). The ADD is supported in this through its T&L Section and by guidance from BP's T&L Policy. The PD of administrative staff, on the other hand, is managed by the HR Directorate. BP also has a Training and Development Committee with clear terms of reference, which meets once every month to review PD applications submitted by staff. It is imperative that these applications be supported by the staff members' line managers and Deans/Directors before

undergoing review by the Committee, as was confirmed through interviews with staff and senior management. These PD applications could be for participation in training workshops, conferences, seminars, or any other event of relevance to the work of the applicant and in alignment with their annual individualised training plan. The training plan for every staff member is developed as a result of the appraisal process 'Aadaa' that they go through yearly and which helps in the identification of staff's PD needs for performance enhancement purposes.

The 'Aadaa' appraisal is regulated by CSB instructions and the results of every 'Aadaa' cycle are analysed and entered into an Annual Training Needs Analysis Report, to be utilized for the development of the institution's training plan for the subsequent academic year. There is also a Performance Management Committee which meets at the end of every 'Aadaa' cycle to ensure that the appraisal process had been conducted as per relevant regulations. BP also has the Incentive Award Committee to ensure validity, transparency, and fairness of staff nominations. The Panel was informed that incentives were awarded to 90 members of staff in the last three years. In addition, the Panel had the opportunity to view a sample of anonymous completed appraisal forms during the site visit, as well as some documents related to the handling of a few staff grievance cases against appraisal ratings. The Panel, in conclusion, views with appreciation the clear, consistent, and fair implementation of BP's performance management and appraisal system.

A large variety of PD opportunities are provided at BP focusing on topics related to the institution's core initiatives. Such topics include student-centered learning, PBL, and assessment and moderation. Participation of faculty members in these training activities was confirmed through interviews and through a review of related documents. In addition, BP organizes on the basis of its staff members' needs a biannual T&L Symposium, which includes mandatory sessions for the faculty. As explained by senior management, there is a regular observation procedure of classrooms to check the impact of the symposium's training on faculty. BP also provides training related to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) requirements. This training is conducted through three initiatives: the CTTL programme offered in the first year of a faculty member's appointment; ADD training on how to fill NQF scorecards and conform to NQF requirements; and training sessions on NQF requirements during the T&L Symposium. Interviews with faculty clarified that NQF training assists in the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to topics such as assessment, credit-recognition, and the writing of ILOs. So far, 20 BP academic programmes have been successfully placed on the NQF register.

Finally, the HR Policy of BP includes guidelines on how staff members' evaluations of PD activities are to be managed and conducted. The policy stipulates that such kind of evaluations are mandatory and entail an overall rating of the facilitation of the PD activity, the environment in which it is held, and its learning outcomes. The results of the evaluations are analysed and then used to feedback information that could be used in the development of related improvement plans and actions. The Panel verified this from the evidence provided and from the interviews with BP management and staff. In result, the Panel considers the staff development policies and opportunities in place appropriate and relevant. They also help BP staff members remain up-to-date in their areas of teaching, research and administration. Thus, the Panel finds the indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

None

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 6: Human Resources Management

Standard 7

Research

The institution has a strategic research plan appropriate for its mission that is translated into a well-resourced operational plan, which is implemented and monitored.

Indicator 23: Research

The institution has implemented a plan for the development of research (e.g. disciplinary specific, scholarship of teaching and learning) appropriate for its institutional type that includes monitoring its research output, together with policies and processes to ensure the ethical and effective conduct of research.

Judgement: Addressed

From interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that since a polytechnic usually differs from a traditional higher education institution, then whenever research is discussed, it is done so in the context of the institution's mission and strategic goals, which explains the current main focus on applied research at BP. In line with this, the Institution requires faculty to coordinate between the BP and the organizations in the industry, so that they and the students can undertake applied research projects that can help industries innovate. To support BP with its research objectives, the Deanship of Applied Research and Enterprise (DARE) was recently established along with the Applied Research & Enterprise Committee, which comprises senior members from across the Institution. BP also has the Research Plan 2016-2017, which sets out the direction and objectives for the integration of research and maps the research objectives to both BP's Strategic Plan and the National Research Strategy. This is supplemented by the more recent 'Mission, Strategy, and Implementation Plan (2018)' of DARE, which identifies targets and KPIs for applied research and enterprise activities. It also reports on the achievement of the included targets and KPIs but only in general terms. Thus, the Panel advises that BP monitors in more detail the achievement of research objectives and their related KPIs.

BP also has a Mission, Strategy and Implementation Plan demonstrating how the planned research activity links to the mission of the Institution. BP aims to achieve one of its strategic goals by focusing, as mentioned above, on applied research through industry-based projects, which involve staff and students. The responsibility of the Applied Research & Enterprise Committee is to discuss the research strategy, plans, needs and time allocation at BP for research, as confirmed during interviews with Senior Management and Faculty. From an examination of the provided supporting materials, the Panel found evidence of emerging research activity ranging from applied research to conference presentations. However, it was also noticed that although there is a strong emphasis on problem-based applied research and research-related policies with a research plan that have been developed, they are still in their infancy.

Considering that DARE is still a new deanship, BP recognises that more research management and support staff are still required and that activities for the future shall focus on building-up of research

policies and systems, applied research services and integration of research capacity. This was confirmed through interviews with senior management and faculty.

With respect to the budget for the support of research, to date, there has been no allocation of funding for DARE. However, the policy on Learning and Development captures the process for application for support, and the site visit interviews with staff, as well as the submitted research activity reports, indicate that there is evidence of research-related activities. The Panel encourages BP, therefore, to expedite the allocation of funding to the DARE, in order to promote scholarship.

BP has a Research and Scholarly Activity Policy that outlines the procedures for research and ethical approval. There is also a Research Policy and Process Committee that was established in March 2018, which is to be responsible for considering and approving applications, as well as providing support and guidance for researchers in submitting applications. Although to date this committee is yet to meet, the Panel considers the individual application process evident, as shown in the supporting materials (e.g. research approval and ethical approval forms) provided for review and examination by the Panel. Therefore, the practice is in place. Still, however, the Panel finds it beneficial for BP to proceed with its plans to immediately activate the Research Policy and Process Committee.

In relation to incentives available for supporting research performance, 5% of academic staff workload per week at BP may be allocated to research and scholarship, and the Applied Research and Enterprise Activity Policy details the process and incentives for such activity. Individually, this may increase to 40% of the normal weekly teaching load of a faculty member in a semester, depending on the research project or activity they're engaged in. However, this workload and research time allocation can change from semester to semester. In addition, over the last two academic years, a considerable number of staff members have been supported to attend conferences, both nationally and internationally. However, while there is a process for business travel, and a policy on Learning and Development, there is no policy on the allocation of funding research activity to incentivise and encourage staff to develop their research performance. The Panel, thus, recommends the development of such a policy.

Finally, in terms of research capacity building opportunities at BP, the Institution is committed to building research capacity in response to help achieve objectives of the Strategic Plan. So far, BP conducted in Semester One of 2018-2019 one workshop on action research in support of this, which faculty were supportive of in interviews during the site visit. In addition, several action research workshops had been conducted through BP's T&L Symposium of 2017. The Panel encourages further development of such activities. Nevertheless, as conveyed in interviews with senior staff and as reported in the SER, no applied research capacity building has been conducted recently. In line with BP's aspiration to become a university, the Panel recommends that BP should implement research capacity building strategies that involve a wider range of research-related topics. Overall, however, the Panel considers the indicator as addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Develop and implement a policy for funding research activity, to incentivise and encourage staff to develop their research performance.

- Implement research capacity building strategies that involve a wider range of research-related topics.

Indicator 24: Higher degrees with research (where applicable)

Where the institution offers higher degrees that include a research component, it provides effective supervision and resources for research students and ensures that its research degrees are of an appropriate level for the programme.

Judgement: Not Applicable

Not Applicable

Recommendation(s)

Not Applicable

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 7: Research

Standard 8

Community Engagement

The institution has a clear community engagement plan that is aligned with its mission and which is operational.

Indicator 25: Community Engagement

The institution has conceptualized and defined the ways in which it will serve and engage with local communities in order to discharge its social responsibilities.

Judgement: Addressed

BP has a clear statement on community engagement that links to its fourth strategic goal 'Engage for Impact'. The Community Initiatives Policy outlines the process to be followed when establishing such initiatives, and a Community Initiatives Programme Approval Document has been under development since the submission of the SER. Although the BP Community Initiatives Policy demonstrates commitment to support staff in community engagement, there is no evidence of monitoring community engagement activities against the strategic plan or of measuring its impact. BP recognises this, as evidenced by senior staff interviews and by the commitment outlined in the Community Engagement Plan 2016-2019 to establish a Steering Committee whose remit will be directly linked to the fourth strategic goal. Thus, although the BP Community Engagement Plan sets out the direction of community engagement activities across the Institution and sets ambitious targets for the future, the contribution from staff and students in this respect remains to be only on a voluntary basis, especially with the lack of implementation of the Community Initiatives Programme. As a result, the Panel recommends that BP should expedite the approval process and implementation of this planned programme and should develop a process to monitor community engagement against the strategic plan.

The community engagement activities conducted are reported annually to the SMT and in the Polytechnic Cabinet Affairs Report. Also, updates are provided in the Commercial & Community Initiatives Annual Report. Many, but not all, activities are student-focused and are related to coursework or projects. As explained in interviews with senior management and with students, most activities are initiated through the student leadership (e.g. BPSC) and reflect charitable efforts. Other student community activities mentioned include ThinkPink awareness campaigns and a trip to Egypt to build schools in disadvantaged areas.

Interaction with external groups is managed in tandem by the ADD, which oversees the relationship between the external groups, the Career and Employment Centre and the Student Services Directorate. Educational visits and scholarships are usually organized by Student Services; whereas, activities related to work placements, work-integrated learning, and industry liaising are organized by the Career and Employment Centre. As to community engagement in the form of curricular activities, these are communicated through the Marketing and Communications Department. Responsibility for generating

revenue and proactively engaging with community groups goes back to the Head of Commercial Initiatives, who is supported by a specialist.

The SER claims that feedback is gathered from external participants involved in community engagement events and that such feedback is used to improve the design and facilitation of future community engagement activities. However, although interviews with stakeholders reported the eliciting of some feedback in relation to community engagement activities, there was no clear evidence submitted to show that this is formally conducted. Hence, the Panel recommends that BP should establish more formal mechanisms to do so.

Community engagement activities are recorded in the Community Engagement Register and reported in the APR Process and the ADD Institutional Annual Report. The APR documents outline the recent activities of the relevant strategic goal and an update is reported to SMT which details the activities undertaken. Generally, the Panel is satisfied with the institution's commitment to engaging with the community and finds this indicator addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- Expedite approval and implementation of the planned Community Initiatives Programme and develop a process to monitor community engagement against the strategic plan.
- Establish formal mechanisms to elicit feedback from stakeholders, in order to improve the designed community engagement activities and facilitate their implementation.

Judgement: The Institution **addresses** Standard 8: Community Engagement