



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Higher Education Review Unit

Institutional Follow-Up Review Report

Royal University For Women

Kingdom of Bahrain

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1. Overview of the Institutional Follow-up Process

The institutional follow-up site visit by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

At least one year after publication of its Institutional Review Report the institution submits to HERU a report which clearly shows how the institution has maintained and/or enhanced the commendations of the review report and specifies how the institution has met its affirmations and recommendations. The institution substantiates its claims with supporting documents, in the form of Appendixes. Details of how the institution is monitoring and evaluating the improvement activities should also be provided.

This follow-up review process applies to all higher education institutions that have had institutional reviews undertaken by HERU.

The Royal University for Women (RUW) submitted an Improvement Plan to HERU in the required time set out in the Handbook for Institutional Reviews. In this Plan actions were identified to address the 19 Recommendations contained in the Institutional Review Report. In November 2010 RUW submitted its One Year Report, which contained a narrative and documentary evidence about the progress the institution has made thus far in implementing quality improvements.

The Panel responsible for the Follow-up comprised the Executive Director of HERU and three Senior Directors, one of whom was the Director responsible for co-ordinating this site visit. The evidence base included: the Institutional Improvement Plan, the relevant appendices, the Institutional Review Report, and relevant supplementary materials submitted in April 2011. Interviews were also held during the site visit with a range of senior managers, academics, administrative staff, students, employers and alumni. These interviews allow the Panel to triangulate the evidence.

The Follow-up visit took place on 18 May 2011, the purpose of which is (i) to assess the progress made in quality enhancement and improvement of the Royal University for Women since the institutional review in January 2009, for which the review report was published in September 2009; and (ii) develop a report which outlines the progress made about the extent to which the Recommendations have been addressed.

This Institutional Follow-up Review Report sets out the findings with regard to the Recommendations contained in the published Review Report. For ease of reading the Recommendations made in the 2009 published Review Report are clustered together (in italics) at the beginning of each section where a new theme is considered. The text that follows reflects the findings of the Panel during its visit in May 2011.

2. Brief Overview of Royal University For Women

The Royal University for Women (RUW) is a private university in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It is housed in a custom-designed campus and is equipped to cater to the needs of 1000 students. A fully equipped sports facility and residence hall is part of the campus. RUW aspires to become a regional leader in academic excellence in women's education, research and development. In 2011 RUW has 601 students and 34 academic staff members. It offers nine programmes across four faculties.

3. Findings of the Follow-up Review by Theme

In the following sub-sections, the progress made in addressing the Recommendations under each theme is considered. The Recommendations from 2009 are clustered together in italics.

3.1 Mission, Planning and Governance

3.1.1 HERU recommends that RUW should actively recruit women in senior leadership and management positions in order to fulfil its mission as a university that encourages women to excel and demonstrate leadership.

3.1.2 HERU recommends that RUW establish an executive management committee to provide leadership that would ensure the viability of the future growth and development of the university.

3.1.3 HERU recommends that RUW ensure that there is a clear delegation of responsibilities for implementing different aspects of the strategic plan.

3.1.4 HERU recommends that RUW should further develop its strategic plan with particular attention to implementation strategies.

3.1.5 HERU recommends that RUW should develop a system which links planning and resource allocation to the academic enterprise and which includes Deans and Heads of Departments.

The University has made several women appointments to senior positions. There is now a female Vice President (albeit Acting) and all the Deans are female. Furthermore 73 per cent of all faculty are female. This gender profile provides students with strong role models, which is in line with the University's vision to prepare students 'to become leaders who are engaged members of society'.

There is now a senior management committee (SMC) which consists of the President, Vice President, Dean of Students and the Director of Finance. The mandate of the committee includes oversight of the functions and business of the University as well as the implementation of the Governance and Quality Assurance Policy. The quality assurance manager reports directly to the President, which is appropriate. The Panel learned during interviews with management that when

specific issues pertaining to quality are being discussed at the SMC, the quality assurance manager is invited to attend the meeting to provide input. At the time of the site visit the SMC had held six meetings and all are duly minuted.

The University has constituted a number of structures and committees. Senate now has five standing committees that meet monthly; each of which provides reports to Senate. The committees are:

- Teaching and Learning
- Graduate & Research Studies
- Community Engagement
- Library
- Continuing Education.

While there are clear responsibilities assigned to each of the standing committees in line with the three year operational plan, the Panel did not find that this stretched to the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This is largely due to the Plan's incompleteness. The Panel encourages RUW to finalise its Strategic Plan and to ensure that there is clear allocation of responsibilities as well as a monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

The University has now developed a system to ensure that the delivery of the academic programmes, budgeting and resource allocation are clearly linked. The budgeting process starts with the departments. Each considers the academic activities that will be undertaken in the next financial year and determines the financial resources needed for implementation. A budget is then drawn up. The budgets are discussed at the Faculty Council after which they are sent to the Dean's Councils for consideration. A consolidated budget which also includes the library and that of the Dean of Students is then deliberated upon by the Senate to ensure that there are sufficient resources to carry out the academic plan. The final budget is approved by the Board of Trustees. The Panel heard with appreciation during a range of interviews that there is appropriate allocation of resources to ensure the quality delivery of programme offerings and other supporting academic activities.

3.2 Academic Standards

3.2.1 HERU recommends that RUW develop rigorous internal processes for approval and review of all its programmes to assist it to achieve sound academic standards.

3.2.2 HERU recommends that RUW revisit the rules around academic campus hours to ensure that they complement the mission of the University, and are aligned to international expectations for higher education.

3.2.3 HERU recommends that RUW ensure that there is intellectual space for RUW Senate to fulfill its role of the custodian of academic integrity as well as providing academic leadership.

3.2.4 HERU recommends that RUW ensure that its policy on plagiarism is communicated clearly to staff and students and consistently applied.

The University has not yet developed a formal policy and procedure for the identification and development of new programmes.

RUW conducts an internal review of programmes in terms of results, and grades to identify any discrepancies and plan for the next semester. However, the University has not yet developed a process to review academic programmes. During interviews the Panel heard that the Teaching and Learning Committee is in the process of developing a periodic programme review framework. The Panel urges the University to address this issue as without a programme review process it is difficult for RUW to be assured of its academic standards.

Deans are responsible for ensuring that academic standards are met and maintained, and that all academic and administrative duties are performed. The academic staff now have some more flexibility to plan and manage their own time. The Panel encourages the University to continue its process of allowing academics autonomy over their time as is the norm in higher education institutions internationally.

The role and terms of reference for Senate have been adjusted. This was approved by the Board of Trustees. In line with international practice, Senate is the custodian of the academic project. The composition of Senate is as follows:

- President
- Vice President
- Deans
- Full-time faculty who hold PhDs
- Director of CGS
- Director of Administration
- Manager of Quality Assurance & Accreditation Unit
- Registrar
- President of the Student Council.

The Panel appreciates the Institution's commitment to inclusivity as demonstrated in Senate's composition. This allows for collegial discussions and decision-making. It also allows for younger career academics to get into the 'academic way of doing things' and so develops a new cohort of faculty. The Panel was told during interviews with faculty members that the time for debate is limited. The University is encouraged to ensure that Senate fully fulfils its role in providing academic leadership for the institution.

The University's plagiarism policy is contained in the Student Handbook and is distributed to students and faculty members. The Handbook is available in hard and soft copy. During staff induction, all faculty members are briefed on the plagiarism policy. Nevertheless, there is a lack of systematic procedures for deterring and

detecting plagiarism at the University. The Panel urges the University to develop and implement a mechanism to deter and detect plagiarism across the faculties.

3.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

3.3.1 HERU recommends that RUW develop a holistic approach to quality assurance, which is centred on continuous quality improvement rather than compliance and correction. Quality assurance processes should be integral to all aspects of the university including governance, administration, and the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

The University has established a Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) to facilitate the culture of continuous quality improvement at RUW. The QAU provides training and support to all staff members; develops processes for the monitoring of Higher Education Council (HEC) regulations through the standing committees of Senate as well as other university bodies; develops relevant and appropriate processes for gathering, collating institutional data and maintaining documentation of these processes; and identifies and develops processes for continuous quality improvement at departmental, faculty and University level.

The Panel was pleased to find that RUW's understanding of quality has evolved from one of compliance to that of continuous improvement. The University has developed a governance and quality assurance policy through which quality will be embedded in all University practices. However, a Quality Assurance Handbook still needs to be developed. The Panel learned during interviews with management that work has begun to develop such a Handbook and that the process includes staff from academic and administrative departments.

3.4 Quality of Teaching and Learning

3.4.1 HERU recommends that RUW develop and implement systematic review of annual course / programme reviews.

3.4.2 HERU recommends that RUW develop and implement a comprehensive staff professional development programme.

Currently there is no system of annual programme/course review. During interviews, the Panel heard that there is a plan to review all academic programmes upon graduating the first cohort. The Panel urges the University to implement this plan as soon as possible.

The University has provided three in-house capacity building workshops. There are plans to conduct a series of professional development activities, such as lectures, workshops, presentations and seminars, at the beginning of the academic year for all faculty and administrative staff. The Panel urges the Institution to develop these into a comprehensive staff development programme that meets the varied needs of staff.

3.5 Student Support

3.5.1 HERU recommends that RUW allocate a specific budget to support student activities and the student council.

The Student Council at RUW plays an important role in organizing a range of student activities; these include social, cultural and recreational events. The Students Affairs Office acts as a strong link between the students and senior management and offers continuous support to the Student Council by, for example, helping to plan these events and processing financial requests from the Council. In interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with these various activities and the opportunity to engage with the local community. Members of the Student Council, however, complained about the high cost of organizing student functions, especially that the allocated budget is not sufficient to cover their expenses. Students informed the Panel that they are required to fund their activities from the revenue of the tickets sales for these events. The students also indicated that they would like the budget to be increased to enable them to organize a wider range of activities. The Panel encourages the University to increase the budget allocated to support students activities as this would enhance their learning experience as well as their professional and personal development.

3.6 Human Resources

3.6.1 HERU recommends that RUW develop and implement a strategic human resources plan for the recruitment and retention of high quality staff.

3.6.2 HERU recommends that RUW implement a systematic performance management and promotion programme for all staff.

3.6.3 HERU recommends that RUW develop and implement a survey for staff satisfaction to improve the working and learning environment.

RUW has yet to develop a formal strategic human resources plan which includes the recruitment and retention of staff. Nevertheless, the Panel heard during interviews with a range of staff that efforts are being made to retain good quality faculty. This includes the use of staff satisfaction surveys and holding discussions with academics at least six months before the expiry of contracts to negotiate their new remuneration packages.

The Panel also learned from management that there is a process underway to determine the market range of packages for different levels of staff to make recruitment and retention of staff more attractive. These initiatives, notwithstanding, the Panel reiterates the need for RUW to develop a formal human resource strategy and to look for innovative ways to overcome recruitment challenges.

The University has developed criteria for promotions. These have been adequately disseminated to all staff. Annual performance appraisal takes place. Whilst the Panel acknowledges these activities it would like to see professional development needs being taken into account during the appraisal period so that there is a formal staff development programme.

3.7 Infrastructure, Physical and Other Resources

3.7.1 HERU recommends that RUW continue to improve its resources, including library resources to cater for current and projected growth in numbers.

The University has now established a library committee to oversee the library's compliance to the HEC regulations and the on-going enhancement of its library collection and services. A librarian was appointed during the 2010-2011 academic year. Some panel members toured the library, and found while there is access to electronic journal databases, the number and scope of the book collection is limited. The latter needs to be strengthened.

3.8 Research

3.8.1 HERU recommends that RUW should develop and prioritise a research – related plan, policy and processes including processes in respect of research ethics.

RUW has recently developed a research plan that has short-, medium-, and long-term objectives. A Research Policy was also developed and was approved by the Board of Trustees in November 2009. The University has allocated a research budget for scientific research as required by the Higher Education Council regulations.

The University has established a Graduate and Research Committee, which is operational. The Panel was pleased to find that a Strategic Operation Plan has been developed to encourage and support research. However while the University has developed a Graduate Student Handbook, the Panel was concerned to find that some pages have been plagiarized. The Panel urges the University to develop its own Graduate Student Handbook and to put a mechanism in place to ensure that this practice does not recur in the future (see below).

3.9 Community Engagement

3.9.1 HERU recommends that RUW should develop a conceptual framework, coordinating structures, policies and resource allocation for community engagement so that individual efforts become part of an institutional plan that is implemented, monitored and reviewed.

The Panel was dismayed to find that a number of policies adopted by RUW had been plagiarized. These include the Community Engagement Policy. This policy is taken from a metropolitan university (University of Johannesburg) within an

entirely different social and political setting from that of RUW. No attempts had been made to customise it. Whilst this raises concern about the integrity of the committee members responsible for the development of the Policy, it also demonstrates that no senior member of the institution had read it before it was tabled at the Board of Trustees for approval. During a range of interviews the Panel found that no staff member could articulate any of the contents of the policy. The Panel strongly urges the University to take immediate action against this practice and to put in place mechanisms to ensure that this does not recur.