



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Higher Education Review Unit

Programmes-within-College Reviews

Report

Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Bridging Programme
School of Nursing & Midwifery
RCSI- Medical University of Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 15-18 October 2012

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Acronyms

ABA	<i>An Bord Altranais</i>
BSc Nursing	Bachelors of Science in Nursing
BSN Bridging	Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Bridging
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HERU	Higher Education Review Unit
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
LRC	Learning Resource Centre
MSc Nursing	Master of Science in Nursing
NAQQAET	National Authority for Qualification and Quality Assurance of Education and Training
NUI	National University of Ireland
PDR	Performance and Development Review
NGP	Nursing Graduate Profile
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QEO	Quality Enhancement Officer
RCSI Dublin	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RCSI- MUB	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SNAC	School of Nursing Academic Committee
SON&M	School of Nursing and Midwifery
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WHO	World Health Organization

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain

Programmes-within-College Reviews are specialized exercises, that focus on the academic standards of each programme and its delivery and the quality assurance arrangements within all learning programmes at Bachelor and Master levels within a college in a particular major disciplinary area. For the purposes of this Framework, while the term ‘College’ is used, it includes the terms ‘Faculty’, ‘School’, (or any other equivalent term) which offers a higher education programme. All programmes leading to a qualification at Bachelor or Master level are in scope and are subject to review with the exception of Masters that are done only by research. Foundation provision may also be reviewed depending on how it has been conceptualized by the institution, for example, if it functions as an extended curriculum rather than a standalone programme.

A Programmes-within-College review of the School of Nursing & Midwifery at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI-MUB) was conducted by HERU of the NAQQAET in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 15-18 October 2012 for the academic programmes offered by the school, these are: Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSc Nursing) programme; Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Bridging programme (BSN Bridging). The Master of Science in Nursing programme (MSc

Nursing), which is under the School of Postgraduates Studies and Research but is managed by the School of Nursing & Midwifery, was also reviewed at the same period.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the BSN Bridging programme based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the RCSI-MUB, the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

RCSI-MUB was notified by the HERU/NAQQAET in March 2012 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of its School of Nursing & Midwifery and School of Postgraduates Studies and Research with the site visit taking place in October 2012. In preparation for the review, RCSI-MUB conducted its school self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER of the BSN Bridging with appendices on the agreed date in August 2012.

HERU constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Nursing and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised four external reviewers.

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel based on:

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

It is expected that the RCSI-MUB will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its BSN Bridging programme. HERU recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence it is the right of RCSI-MUB to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this report, RCSI-MUB is required to submit to HERU an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

HERU would like to extend its thanks to RCSI-MUB for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College Reviews process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty in the RCSI-MUB.

1.3 Overview of the School of Nursing and Midwifery

The RCSI-MUB was established in 2003 under license from the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain. RCSI-MUB is a constituent university of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI Dublin). It comprises three schools, namely: Medicine; Nursing; and Postgraduate Studies and Research. The School of Nursing & Midwifery (SON&M) at the RCSI-MUB was founded in 2006. It is an international centre serving primarily the Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) countries but open to applicants from outside this region. The School is responsible for managing three programmes, namely: The BSc Nursing programme; the BSN Bridging programme; and the MSc Nursing programme which is placed under the School of Postgraduates Studies and Research but is managed by the SON&M.

1.4 Overview of the BSN Bridging Programme

The BSN Bridging programme was developed and is delivered with the assistance and support of the School of Nursing & Midwifery in RCSI Dublin. The curriculum has been developed in accordance with the nursing regulations for Ireland and Europe.

The BSN Bridging programme is designed to prepare registered nurses who are educated to an associate diploma level to accomplish their BSc degree. This programme provides the period of further study necessary for professional role development, leadership in nursing and for preparation for further study at postgraduate level. The programme was approved by Bahrain's Higher Education Council in 2009 and the National University of Ireland (NUI). The SON&M has graduated two cohorts of 33 and 37 BSN Bridging students in the academic years 2010-11 and 2011-12, respectively. There are 54 students currently registered in the programme. Three full-time faculty members and one part-time lecturer share the teaching responsibility of the BSN Bridging programme at the SON&M.

The BSN Bridging programme aims to produce nursing graduates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of graduates of a centre of excellence. The graduates are expected to practice safely and effectively as professional nurses. The SON&M has adopted an outcome-based approach in the curriculum and developed the Nursing Graduate Profile in which a set of defined 'exit outcomes' has been agreed through consultation.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the BSN Bridging Programme

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	Confidence

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 The programme addresses a need within the sector of a population with busy working lives. There is good evidence that the planning framework demonstrates clear aims. The aims of the programme are in line with the stated mission of RCSI-MUB and describe well the programme's purpose to serve a specific section of the nursing workforce in Bahrain whose careers are limited by their diploma status and the advantages of progressing to a BSc. The aims to develop students' academic and leadership skills, advancing them to degree level are clear. However, there is confusion in terms of the programme's relationship between the graduates' clinical competence on entry, 'graduates will, on entry be competent to practice safely' and the aim to 'develop advanced, clinical health assessment skills in order to appropriately assess clients in different health care settings'. No evidence is provided to support the concept that this is an advanced practitioners' programme.
- 2.2 The BSN Bridging programme is a part-time degree, delivered over three academic semesters. The programme runs in semesters and is modularized. Each module is a unit of learning with specific content. The programme is well-structured and appropriate for the students' profile. There is evidence that the curriculum is constructed using validated methods to provide academic progression module-on-module with self-contained units which build a profile of intended graduate attributes. The programme benefits from the variety of experience and learning styles amongst the mature learner student group. The Panel saw evidence of this being utilized to support module-on-module progression. However, the formal curriculum component is restricted to teaching and learning disciplines, as there is no formal clinical placement. There is, therefore, no formal evidence to support that the course enhances professional practice or advances clinical health assessment skills. It is recognized however, that good learning and academic achievement has a supportive beneficial effect on clinical practice as witnessed in the evidence gained in the interviews with employers and students. The Panel suggests that the School revise the programme aims so that the assertion that the programme advances clinical skills or competence as a primary aim or learning outcome and the curriculum content are in line.
- 2.3 The SON&M has adopted an outcome-based approach in the curriculum which focuses on the end product of nursing education. The SON&M has developed a Nursing Graduate Profile (NGP), which is referred to as the 'exit outcomes', where a set of defined graduate attributes has been agreed through consultation and was benchmarked against the *An Bord Altranis* (ABA) and standards for nurse

registration in Ireland. The NGP defines the professional knowledge, skills, values and attitudes expected of the nursing graduates upon graduation and also provides a definite framework for the organization, delivery, evaluation and assessment of the nursing curriculum. The Panel examined the submitted documents and found the curriculum documents to be comprehensive and well prepared.

- 2.4 The syllabus is constructed within the framework of the NUI and ABA in Ireland and through consultation. The ABA defines the professional knowledge, skills, values and attitudes expected of the graduate nurses. The Board also provides a definite framework for the organization, delivery, evaluation and assessment of the nursing curriculum.
- 2.5 The programme Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are clearly stated in the programme specifications and are aligned to the programme aims. The courses ILOs are mapped to the programme ILOs, aligned with assessment strategies and are available on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Examination of submitted documents and interviewing faculty members and students show that the programme and course ILOs guide the learning experiences and assessment tasks. The combination of clear assessment structure, personnel support, combined with strong focus on critical learning and thinking through a clinical perspective creates a positive environment to attain the ILOs and student success. Whereas the teaching and learning outcomes for the theoretical components are satisfactorily evidenced, the clinical and work-based intentions are described in a more aspirational, less focused manner. For example, the SER states that the programme aims to equip students 'to undertake further professional role development'. It is not clear how this is to be evidenced.
- 2.6 There is a variety of teaching and learning strategies employed to achieve the modules ILOs. This includes a combination of classroom, tutorials and one-to-one contact. There is a well-expressed appreciation of the diversity of academic, clinical and life experience of this particular group of learners and measures to address their need. Given the work-based experience of the students, there is strong encouragement for students to utilize their clinical experience to enter into academic skill learning acquisition. This is good practice. The School, however, needs to formalize this approach by developing a formal relationship between the programme and the students' places of work as a learning setting.
- 2.7 The modular requirements and assignments are clearly defined in the Mark and Standards and Examination & Assessment documents. The SON&M uses a rigorous level of internal moderation, external examination and university committee ratification and approval. The Marks and Standards document and all assessment policies and procedures are revised annually and published on the VLE. Module

assessment includes formative and continuous summative assessment with high value for final summative assessment. Methods of continuous and summative assessment include a variety of approaches, such as written, oral, individual and group project. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that the assessment practices and modalities are appropriate and linked to the programme and course ILOs. Provision is made for all students to receive constructive feedback, review their examination papers and appeal their results if they so wish. There is evidence that the system has the ability to adapt in the light of feedback from students and the external examiner.

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

- An outcome-based approach is adopted in the curriculum which focuses on the end product of nursing education.
- The assessment and grading processes are transparent, fair and rigorous.
- There is a systematized process of preparation and moderation of examination papers both internally and externally and there is evidence that the assessment system has the ability to adapt in the light of feedback from students and the external examiner.
- The programme utilizes the work-based experience of the students and encourages them to employ their clinical experience into academic skill learning acquisition.

2.9 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the School of Nursing & Midwifery should:

- revise the programme aims so that the primary aims of the programme and the curriculum content are in line
- develop a formal relationship between the programme and the students' places of work as a learning setting.

2.10 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **The Learning Programme**.

3 Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

- 3.1 The admission requirements and admission policy of the SON&M are clearly outlined and are available on the university website. Documentation in relation to the admission policy is satisfactory. Students apply directly through an online application process. The programme is efficient in terms of admitted students, the use of available resources, staff, infrastructure and student support. There is evidence that the admission criteria are reviewed annually and revised as needed.
- 3.2 There are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the programme. This is evident in the organogram of the SON&M. There is also evidence of active involvement of SNAC in discussing academic issues. This was reflected in the minutes of the monthly SNAC meetings.
- 3.3 There are currently 54 students in the programme. There are three full-time faculty members (1 PhD, 2 Masters holders) and one part-time staff member involved with teaching in the programme. In addition to their qualification, teaching staff members are specialists in clinical practice, healthcare ethics, clinical health assessment, leadership, management and practice. The qualifications of the teaching staff are in line with requirements of the programme and the modules they teach. However, it is a concern that staff members involved in teaching clinical modules do not have a system of ensuring that they maintain their clinical expertise.
- 3.4 The student-to-teaching staff ratio is 20:1 which is acceptable. This ratio should give staff adequate time to focus on research and other academic related activities. However, as staff members are also involved in the teaching of other programmes offered by the SON&M, the Panel notes with concern the heavy teaching load which leaves little room to engage in research activities. This raises a concern of how the School supports the identified key thematic research areas of the university and how the teaching staff members are staying current in their fields. The Panel is of the view that the School needs to give attention to the high workload of teaching staff to allow for research and other scholarly activities.
- 3.5 There are clear procedures for the recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention of academic staff as outlined in the SER. There is an induction package for newly admitted staff to orient them to the university and the nursing programmes. During interviews, staff confirmed that they received induction and they are aware of the specific requirements for promotion. There is a Performance and Development Review (PDR) document that outlines the performance and development review

cycle which is done annually; the process was confirmed by the staff members who were interviewed.

- 3.6 There is a functional management information system that is stored in the Quercus data management system to enable informed decision-making. All student assessment data is stored and collated through the Quercus management system while finance information is collated by the Agresso data management system. The Panel learned that the information is secured and a daily back-up in a separate disc is maintained. The student services database and the VLE are held independently. The Panel learned through interviews that all students and teaching staff have been trained and are currently using the system. There is a central tracking system of students' usage of the VLE and their involvement and engagement with the modules. The staff reported benefits of the system with regard to storing, exchange, and retrieval of information. The Panel acknowledges the effective usage of the information and communication technology in the management of the programme.
- 3.7 There are effective policies and procedures for ensuring the safe keeping of students' records and accuracy of the data and examination results. There is an implemented examination policy, and a comprehensive and detailed procedure manual which regulates the conduct of examinations, and the management of students records and examination results.
- 3.8 The Panel toured the facilities and found that there are adequate classrooms, halls, and well-equipped laboratories. The library stock of books, journals, IT infrastructure and access to e-resources are adequate. There is evidence of students' involvement in planning and the designing of learning spaces. There is a tracking system to determine the usage of the Learning Resource Centre (LRC). The institution uses a centralized timetabling system including booking of lecture theatres and tutorial rooms. There is also a tracking system to determine students' attendance, staff and student usage of VLE and utilization of library. The Learning Resource Centre uses Athens Access Management System to determine the usage of e-resources. The SON&M uses Moodle as a platform for the delivery of the curriculum. There is evidence of the effective use of the VLE for various learning activities which includes, but is not limited to, uploading of lecture notes.
- 3.9 Students' academic achievements are monitored by the programme team at a number of stages throughout the year. There is evidence of functional and comprehensive academic student support services in relation to the usage of library and provision of textbooks and e-resources. The Library and the LRC promote both self and communal learning. The learning environment is conducive to expanding the students' experiences and knowledge through informal learning. This was confirmed during the interviews with students. They expressed that they are made to

feel part of the university community. There is evidence of adequate support and facilities to support students who have challenges with English language. Students reported a positive impact of the pre-sessional English language proficiency courses on their studies; the same was confirmed by faculty members.

- 3.10 Newly admitted students receive a student handbook and attend orientation sessions in the first week at the start of the academic year. Moreover, all students receive a laptop and are given special training in study skills and the use of the VLE. During interviews with students, the Panel learned that they are satisfied with the orientation programme and after examining the submitted documents it found it to be effective.
- 3.11 The SON&M has a system for continuously tracking progress of students at risk of failure through the three semesters. The programme coordinator along with the faculty members monitor the academic progress of the students closely throughout their studies and if needed refer them to the Student Welfare Office who would complete a student contact form and report on it. Students can also benefit from a maximum of ten counselling sessions, free of charge, in provisional clinics if needed. The availability of these services were confirmed by students during interview sessions. The first year students are also given support in English language and Study Skills which students reported to be beneficial. This has reflected positively on an excellent retention/progression rate of students.
- 3.12 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Efficiency of the Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is an effective admission policy that is continuously revised and improved.
 - There is evidence of effective support for students who have English language difficulties.
 - There is a range of students' support services which are effective in supporting the academic and non-academic students' needs.
 - Appropriate arrangements are in place for the induction of newly admitted students and for ensuring that all students receive continuing guidance and support.
 - There is an effective usage of information and communication technology in the management of the programme.
 - The learning environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning and the use of VLE.
- 3.13 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the School of Nursing & Midwifery should:

- develop and implement a plan to ensure that teaching staff maintain their clinical expertise
- revise the faculty members' teaching load to allow for research and other scholarly activities.

3.14 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme**.

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The graduate attributes, exit requirements, and career pathways for students who exit from the BSN Bridging programme are clearly defined. During interview sessions, the Panel heard accounts of different experiences where attained attributes are improving the working environment of the graduates.
- 4.2 The programme curriculum is developed based on the nursing education requirements for Bahrain, the GCC, Ireland and World Health Organization (WHO). The programme is also benchmarked against the nursing programmes within the NUI to ensure its standards are comparable to international programmes.
- 4.3 There is evidence of alignment of assessments to learning outcomes as specified in the Examination and Assessment document. This was confirmed during the site visit, where the Panel examined samples of assessments and found the process of matching the assessment to the course and to individual unit learning outcomes to be appropriate.
- 4.4 The SON&M has a system of internal moderation whereby a sample of marked students' scripts is moderated by a second marker who ensures grades awarded are appropriate and consistent with the model answer. The process is monitored further by the Nursing Examination Committee and external examiners.
- 4.5 The SON&M uses external moderation to assure high standards in the administration of examinations. External examiners are internationally recruited and approved by NUI. The Panel studied the external examiners' reports and noted evidence of external examiners' involvement in reviewing all aspects of the programme assessment, including commenting on the overall assessment strategy and reviewing and commenting on examination scripts. Feedback from the external examiners indicates equivalence in quality of student achievement between students of RCSI-MUB and those of other international nursing schools with which the external examiners are familiar.
- 4.6 The Panel examined a sample of students' assessed work and found the level of students' achievements and the internal moderation to be appropriate. The Panel is of the view that the graduates' achievements, as demonstrated in the final results, meet the programme aims and ILOs.
- 4.7 RCSI-MUB has developed and approved a formal plagiarism policy that was adopted by the SON&M on 18 September 2012. The Panel notes the commitment of

faculty members to address issues related to plagiarism. The institution is encouraged to develop a mechanism to disseminate its recently adopted formal policy, monitor its implementation and evaluates its effectiveness.

- 4.8 The Panel reviewed the examination results of the graduates of the last two years (2010, 2011). There is no evidence to compare the rates of progression, retention and destination of graduates with those achieved nationally, regionally and internationally. However, the Panel found the results to reflect an exceptionally good completion time.
- 4.9 The SON&M has not yet established an advisory board. However, during the site visit the Panel interviewed representatives from affiliated clinical institutions and other stakeholders who participate in programme-related activities such as part-time teaching, students' sponsors and graduates employers. The Panel noted continuous involvement of key partners in the development of the programme. However, this involvement needs to be formalized. The Panel recommends that the SON&M formalize a programme advisory board.
- 4.10 Two cohorts have graduated from the programme. The Panel met with representatives from employers' who expressed satisfaction with the graduates' competencies and the way the programme has improved the graduates' knowledge and critical thinking. The Panel was informed, during interviews with the programme team, that the school is planning to conduct a formal feedback survey for both its graduates and their employers. The Panel encourages the School to expedite this process. RCSI-MUB has established an alumni portal for the graduates. However, during discussion, the Panel learned that graduates are not aware of the alumni office and are generally not aware of activities with alumni. There is a need to establish a formal relationship with its alumni.
- 4.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The graduates' attributes are clearly stated and are comparable with similar programmes and meet the professional expectations.
 - The attained attributes are improving the working environment of the graduates.
 - There are exceptionally good completion times.
 - The graduates are well regarded by employers and other stakeholders for their improved critical thinking and readiness for leadership.
 - There is evidence that the assessment practices and modalities are appropriate and linked to the course and programme ILOs.
- 4.12 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the School of Nursing & Midwifery should:

- formalize a programme advisory board
- establish a formal relationship with alumni, and expedite the implementation of graduates and employer surveys.

4.13 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.

- 5.1 In 2010, RCSI-MUB underwent a review of all its policies and procedures to ensure their relevance to Bahraini students, as many had been originally developed for RCSI Dublin. Policies, regulations and guidelines published on the VLE relating to students are comprehensive and contextualized for Bahraini students. For staff, there remain some policies and guidelines that require contextualization (for example the Quality e- Handbook), but in interviews the Panel learned that staff are aware of this and are liaising with RCSI Dublin, as Dublin reviews their policies and procedures to ensure they retain relevance to the Bahrain environment. The Panel concludes that there is a comprehensive suite of student policies and procedures readily accessible on the VLE. The Panel acknowledges RCSI-MUB's proactive approach to revising these policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure their suite remains current and relevant to Bahrain.
- 5.2 The reclassification of some of the committees and dissolution of others, the Panel learned, resulted in the rationalization of some of the institution's committees, the establishment of a separate nursing structure; and the representation of nursing on all key committees. The Panel confirmed that nursing staff were represented on key committees. Moreover, the positions of Head of School of Medicine and the Vice-President for academic affairs were separated recently to ensure that there is equity amongst the three schools within RCSI-MUB.
- 5.3 SNAC is the key academic nursing committee, which is well attended with teaching staff from all programmes as members. Programme issues are discussed at each meeting with programme or module modifications approved by SNAC or forwarded to the Academic Board for approval depending on the magnitude of the revision. Whilst there is range and diversity in the SNAC meetings, the Panel encourages SNAC to introduce standing agenda item/s or periodic reporting requirements that ensure regular discussion and systematic follow-up of issues pertaining to the programme, processes of implementation and assessment, students, and stakeholders.
- 5.4 The Quality Enhancement Office (QEO) is newly established with the Director recently recruited with the mandate to promote a quality culture and enhancement of the academic programme. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), a newly developed committee, reporting to RCSI Dublin, is responsible for the creation of the Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement policy and for the implementation of

quality processes and quality improvement activities across academic and administrative areas of RCSI-MUB. The QEO has developed its quality enhancement strategy that is built around the European standards for internal and external quality assurance in higher education. The strategy aims at collecting data that enables QAC to assure the quality of all aspects of the academic programmes, including the validation of new programmes, courses and modules.

- 5.5 After careful examination of all related documents and interviewing staff members, the Panel concludes that there is a commitment to quality assurance and improvement by staff. However, there is a range of structures, committees, positions and strategies newly established or developed, the impact on quality of which the Panel cannot yet assess. The Panel encourages RCSI-MUB to expedite the communication and the implementation of the institution's Quality Enhancement Strategy and to ensure that the Programme Enhancement and Improvement Plan is integrated into this. The Panel encourages RCSI-MUB to continue to implement these changes as planned to take forward the quality agenda.
- 5.6 There is a quality enhancement strategy which is available to all staff on the institution's webpage. During interviews, the Panel heard evidence from a range of academic and administrative staff of their understanding of how they contribute to the quality of the nursing programmes. The Panel heard evidence that administrative staff understood their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision of services through feedback from students and staff. The Panel recommends that RCSI-MUB consider how to formalize some of the feedback mechanisms and ensure that there is a systematic approach to data collection, review, monitoring and follow-up coupled with accountability at all levels for 'closing the loop' i.e. follow-up and evaluation.
- 5.7 There is a mechanism for the development of new programmes to ensure the programmes are relevant, fit for purpose, and comply with existing regulations. The Panel was informed that there is no formal policy for the approval of new programmes. However the programme team is clear on the process. The Panel recommends that a policy and procedure be developed for the establishment of new programmes and contextualization of programmes intended to be delivered from RCSI Dublin. Further, the policy should include the requirement that key stakeholders be involved explicitly at the stage of development and thereafter at regular and stated intervals, thus formalizing this vital mechanism of feedback from stakeholders.
- 5.8 Currently, the programme is evaluated through external examiners' reports, stakeholder, employer and student feedback. A programme analysis report was sent to SNAC earlier this year, with an action plan developed. The intention is to conduct these evaluations annually. There have been no formalized internal programme

reviews to date, which in part is understandable given that the programme is comparatively new. A five-year rolling calendar of internal/external reviews (administrative and academic) has been developed with the QEO responsible for coordinating these reviews. These reviews will commence in 2013. The Panel acknowledges this intention, and encourages RCSI-MUB to formalize the conduct and follow-up of the annual performance analysis reports.

- 5.9 There are mechanisms for communicating programme review reports and students information to SNAC and the Academic Board. The Panel recommends that reporting of the resultant action plan along with the improvement and enhancement plan developed as a result of the submitted programme evaluations to NAQQAET are monitored by the QEO to ensure completion.
- 5.10 The quality of the programme is maintained through annual reports to SNAC that include issues related to external examiner reports, curriculum, progression and retention. SNAC considers and approves, for example, recommendations of external examiners and ensures the changes are made accordingly; improvements and changes are forwarded to the Academic Committee. There is a draft policy on students' feedback which is available on the VLE and accessible by students. There is evidence that improvements had been made as a result of their feedback. This was also confirmed through students' interview sessions. The Panel acknowledges the commitment of staff to improving the standard and quality of students, particularly in responding to feedback from students, external examiners and stakeholders. The Panel commends the students for their commitment to their studies and the commitment of teaching staff to their institution, RCSI-MUB. Though the Panel saw evidence of student feedback noted in SNAC's meetings, it encourages a more thorough recording of actions taken as a result of recommendations, with progress and timelines recorded so that SNAC can identify any actions, which have not progressed and assess the impact of changes as a result of actions.
- 5.11 There is a Performance and Development Review (PDR) document which states that staff should be given the opportunity to share career aspirations and growth and an individual plan developed accordingly. There is a staff Learning and Development Policy, which encourages and outlines financial support for staff who wish to apply and study as part of their on-going professional development. Interviewed staff confirmed that they have had a PDR during the past year and staff development had been discussed with them. Staff also indicated to the Panel that peer evaluation is an important informal process, which can be conducted by colleagues at their request to improve their teaching and delivery of lectures. Staff interviewed were not aware of any calendar of professional development activities throughout the year. The Panel appreciates RCSI-MUB's commitment to ensuring an annual PDR review is conducted for all staff. The Panel also acknowledges RCSI-MUB for their

commitment to upgrading academic qualifications through making funds for this available. The Panel recommends that a staff training needs analysis be conducted and an annual schedule of professional training for academic and administrative staff be developed and integrated into the current workshops with RCSI Dublin and funded opportunities, in order to enhance professional development for RCSI-MUB staff.

5.12 RCSI-MUB realizes the valuable input of its stakeholders in its strategic plan. The stakeholders are also represented in the Board of Governance. Although the SON&M has not conducted any survey to scope the market need, the School relies on Bahrain Labour Fund's (Tamkeen's) conducted analysis of the labour market needs, and future gaps. Tamkeen also provides sponsorships to support the BSN Bridging programme among others. All of the nursing programmes were offered as a result of labour market gaps as identified by Tamkeen. RCSI-MUB continues to monitor new opportunities, again as identified by Tamkeen and has plans to explore developing regional priorities.

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

- There is a comprehensive suite of student policies and procedures contextualized to the needs of Bahrain and readily accessible on the VLE.
- There is a quality enhancement strategy which is available to all staff on the institution webpage.
- There is an effective feedback system from students with responses and identified actions published on the VLE.
- There is evidence of follow up on recommendations made by external examiners, students and employers.
- Staff development and conference funds are available to, and are used by, full-time and part-time staff.

5.14 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the School of Nursing & Midwifery should:

- develop a mechanism through which the Quality Enhancement Office and School of Nursing Academic Committee communicate and coordinate enhancement activities to ensure follow-up of actions within a timeframe
- develop a formal policy and procedures for programme development and reviews which includes stakeholder involvement
- conduct needs analysis for staff development for both administrative and academic staff which results in a calendar of regular staff development activities

- formalize a clear mechanism to ensure that recommendations from all internal and external stakeholders are addressed within a specified timeframe.

5.15 Judgement

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

6. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the *HERU/NAQQAET Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing-Bridging Programme of School of Nursing & Midwifery offered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical University of Bahrain.