



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

**Directorate of Higher Education
Reviews
Programmes-within-College Reviews Report**

**Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design
College of Art and Design
Royal University for Women
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 31 October – 2 November 2016
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Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	2
The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process.....	3
1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme.....	7
2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme.....	13
3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates.....	20
4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.....	27
5. Conclusion.....	33

Acronyms

BAID	Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CIDA	Council of Interior Design Accreditation
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information System
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
RUW	Royal University for Women
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System
WVU	West Virginia University

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Royal University for Women

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by College of Art and Design of Royal University for Women was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on (31 October -2 November 2016) for the academic programmes offered by the College, these are: Bachelor of Arts in Fashion Design; Bachelor of Arts in Graphic Design; Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design; and Master of Design Management.

Royal University for Women was notified by the DHR/BQA on 17 April 2016 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of its College of Art and Design with the site visit taking place in October/November 2016. In preparation for the review, Royal University for Women conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date in June 2016.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Fashion Design, Graphic Design, Interior Design and Design Management, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised eight reviewers.

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

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

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to Royal University for Women for the cooperative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty and administrative staff of the College of Arts in Interior Design.

C. Overview of the College of Art and Design

The College of Art and Design is one of the four colleges of the Royal University for Women (RUW), which was established in 2002. RUW currently offers ten undergraduate and two postgraduate programmes on a range of disciplines. The mission of the College is aligned with the vision and mission of RUW, which seeks to offer students 'a rewarding and challenging multi-cultural learning environment that cultivates strong, well-rounded personalities, encourages leadership, and builds character, social consciousness and community'. Currently, the College offers four bachelor degrees and two Master degrees through two departments: Department of Design and the Department of Architecture. The statistics provided by the College during the site visit indicate that the total number of academic staff was 22; 17 of them are full-time and five are teaching on a part-time basis.

D. Overview of the Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design

The Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design (BAID) was first offered in the academic year 2004-2005, graduating its first batch comprising two students in 2008-2009. The BAID programme is offered through the Department of Design and currently, there are nine full-time and three part-time faculty members contributing to the programme. The programme was initially designed by Middlesex University in the U.K. and has been revised based on internal and external reviews. According to the statistics provided

by the institution, currently there are 78 students registered in the BAID programme and 80 students have graduated since the commencement of the programme.

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design

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

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 1.1 RUW has a clear academic planning framework. This is informed by its vision and mission statements as described in the Strategic Plan, on its website, and in its Programme Handbook. As indicated in the SER, the Handbook and the Programme Specification contain reference to the aims and objectives which link to the vision and mission of the College and the University. There is abundant evidence from policy statements to committee minutes and from a range of sources, indicating clear engagement with academic planning and resultant adjustment to content and approach. The Panel acknowledges that the programme aims are appropriate to the level of the programme, however they are limited in range and ambition. The opening sentence states that 'RUW provides learning experiences that focus on designing and planning safe, healthy, and appropriate environments for individuals and groups, including special needs populations.' This statement does not sufficiently recognise the increasing importance of skilled approaches to the design of interiors and the potential of the subject to deepen its relevance and impact. Site interviews with faculty members and senior management indicated a further lack of clarity, when asked about the specific ethos of the Interior Design programme. Currently the programme aims contribute, in part, to the College mission, however that statement is as generic as that of the programme and does not sufficiently chime with the University mission and vision. That students explore a professional, disciplinary field is one thing, but how this enables RUW to become the 'regional leader in academic excellence for women' is something else. The Panel recommends that the College should consider – for the next periodic review of the programme – that its aims contribute more directly to the achievement of RUW mission and vision.
- 1.2 The BAID programme comprises 132 credits hours that are distributed as follow: 30 credits foundation; 21 credits liberal art requirement courses; 21 credit general courses; 54 credits major requirements and six credit electives. Prerequisites are communicated in the RUW Academic Brochure. The Programme Handbook outlines the programme structure: from the Foundation, (year 1), divided into stages 1–4 and progressing in complexity and ambition, from 'Exploratory' via 'Pathway' to 'Confirmatory'; then through years 2–4. The Panel appreciates that the broad based nature of the first year offers a good basis for consolidation and diagnostic student centred study planning. It also provides a level of opportunity for students to confirm or refine their choice of specialism, or, in rare cases and with staff guidance, to redirect their studies. It enshrines the value of iterative experiences for students, building towards the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge; this is underpinned by the College's international benchmarking process. The balance of theory and practice is also

appropriate for a programme at this level. Each year includes a mix of theoretical and practical courses including Theory of Art and Design (DES 201) and History of Interior Design (IDN 291) through to Professional Practice Methods (DES 231). During interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that there is provision in place for the College to undertake a review of the blend of theory and practice framed by the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), with reference to the PILO achievement matrix introduced in 2014-2015. This will be used to inform future planning and curriculum adjustments. From onsite observation, the Panel was satisfied that the curriculum offered students a rounded experience (site exhibition, meeting with students). Students expressed satisfaction with their workload, which is commensurate with that on comparable programmes internationally, and they clearly understood that the curriculum was balanced and appropriate to their field of study and current industry requirements. The Panel appreciates that the programme content is relevant, with an appropriate mix of theory and practical courses.

- 1.3 Differing types of benchmarking have taken place with a variety of institutions and organizations in the UK and North America, with significant input from West Virginia University (WVU), which had undertaken an informal review of a cross section of RUW courses in 2012. The courses in question were subject to comparison with the 2011 standards of the Council of Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA). The Panel was provided with course documents that contain an appropriate level of detail regarding what is expected of students in order to attain the relevant CILOs. They also include the number of contact hours, pre/co requisites, the instructor contact details, the course structure, the ILOs, the required readings, and facilities (e.g. guests lectures and field trips). The Panel studied the provided syllabus and notes with appreciation that the breadth of subjects covered is benchmarked and offers some flavour of regional specificity. Notwithstanding the above and in order to ensure currency and relevance, faculty need to reconsider how the required reading and core texts are best served in these documents e.g. Interior Design Project 2, Sustainable Design Course Specification solely references publications over a decade old. More broadly, the overall reading list and library stock for Interior Design should be expanded to include more critically located texts to supplement the high proportion of technical and stylistic publications. Professional practice is integrated directly *via* industry placement, however evidence of research/teaching linkages are not as explicit as they might be. It is clear, from onsite interviews with faculty members, that there is a building awareness of the centrality of research, and there were indications that junior members were being mentored; however, evidence from senior staff CV's indicated areas where research was untapped in a curricular context. The Panel recommends that the College should revise and update course content with current staff research interests incorporated, in order to foster clear research teaching linkages.

- 1.4 The Programme specification includes detail on PILOs, categorised in four headings A through D. These are written as concise and relevant elements, which are small in number but broad in impact. This is useful to support students' understanding of what they have learned and achieved. The Panel notes that the PILOs are well linked to the aims of the programme and appropriate for the type and the level of degree awarded. The Panel also appreciates that, in general, the PILOs are compact and precise, incorporate Blooms' Taxonomy action verbs, and are carefully mapped to specific curricular content, as illustrated on the Curriculum Skills Map. Nonetheless, in category B 'Subject Specific Skills', B1 states that students should 'Create practical and creative solutions in order to produce pleasing outcomes'. The Panel considers the use of the word 'pleasing' is problematic in that it oversimplifies design practice, and is subjective. The Panel advises the use of more neutral terms, such as 'appropriate outcomes' would be preferable.
- 1.5 As with the PILOs, the CILOs are appropriate to course level and content. As previously indicated in paragraph 1.1 benchmarking has been applied to programme design, and from onsite interviews, it is clear that students, alumnae and stakeholders/employers are able to input into this process. There are also appropriate mechanisms for monitoring the quality and relevance of CILOs including the Quality Criteria Evaluation Form. The Panel notes that PILOs and CILOs are under continuous evaluation and that recent observations and review of the BAID had highlighted areas requiring attention. As indicated in paragraph 1.4, the mapping method used is the Curriculum Skills Map. What is unclear from both this and course specifications is how levelness is expressed. The matrix indicates that achievement of an individual PILO is covered, sometimes by multiple courses at different levels, without progression, or language being adjusted to differentiate between Interior Design projects I to V where PILO 3D is repeatedly attained. Detailed mapping of CILOs to PILOs was not provided and evidence does not include the CILOs of each course mapped onto the PILOs. The Panel recommends that the College should conduct the CILO to PILO mapping, with the opportunity to emphasise critical thinking (in levels 1-3) and exploration of context (local and tectonic) in Level (4).
- 1.6 Work-based learning is integral to the programme. This is governed by the Internship Policy and Procedure. Recently, the internship became a compulsory course (IND496) for the College's students and the number of training hours increased from 120 to 200 following the 2013-2014 major programme review. Since 2015-2016, all the College's internships are recorded as DES496 and students are required to have completed at least 66 credit hours to be eligible to apply for it. According to the Internship Policy and Procedure, students submit an internship application form and this is used, in turn, to select an instructor by the course co-ordinator. The process is clearly governed with a company/stakeholder supervisor and the instructor looking after the student 'experience' and ensuring relevance. The course is credit bearing with three credit

hours attached. The course specification outlines the structure of the internship in considerable detail, with clear Assessment/CILO mapping in section 16, however section 19 'Infrastructure and Needed Resources' contains reading material which would benefit from updating, as it includes titles which are significantly out of date. During interviews, faculty, employers, students and alumnae all spoke highly of the value of the course. Furthermore, the course is carefully monitored *via* formal mechanisms including, Employers Evaluation and student reporting on their experience. The Panel also notes that informally students are undertaking a programme, which inevitably involves many instances of work based experience acquisition, including site surveys, the preparation of shop drawings for manufacture (e.g. of furniture), the setting up of exhibitions, and research into the viability and application of materials. The Panel appreciates that the internship course alongside the blended nature of a design programme, where by necessity theory and practice sit side by side, and in some cases fuse together, ensure that students are continually exposed to industry and theory relevant content.

- 1.7 The RUW College approaches to teaching and learning are formally constituted in a single policy and distributed across various documents and approaches including staff and student handbooks. Clarity of communication is less obvious regarding teaching and learning methods listed under each PILOs' category and how they facilitate learning. This is in part, due to the fragmented nature of their presentation, which inevitably dismantles the studio experience into small independent experiences, which might facilitate measurement in terms of attainment of ILOs, but is counter to integrative creative study. The Panel recommends that the College should revisit the definition of teaching and learning methods, and consider grouping these independently from the flow of the PILOs in order to more accurately reflect the iterative nature of learning through design. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel notes that courses provide a balanced spread of theoretical and practical content, with students experiencing a blend of studio, workshop, offsite manufacture and site visit experience, alongside exhibiting work outside of the institution. This blend also incorporates e-learning *via* the Learning Management System (LMS) PowerCampus used throughout the programme. The LMS provides opportunities regarding monitoring of course engagement, the supplementing of studio material (rich media, video, recordings of lectures and workshops). From onsite visits and meetings with alumnae and the current student body, it is clear that students are engaged with the programme blend and appreciate their preparedness for practice; although, they expressed some enthusiasm for more focused computer aided design instruction and more skills acquisition from workshop experiences. Their engagement with independent learning, in the form of presentations, seminars and practical experience had clearly impacted them as individuals. The Panel appreciates that students are able to understand and communicate their educational experience in an informed way, and exhibit the attributes of independent learners.

- 1.8 The RUW Assessment Policy revised in 2016 is the current policy. The policy is circulated *via* the LMS and in the Student Handbook, and contains detail on moderation and second marking, and achievement relative to academic level. The Panel notes that the Assessment Policy is thorough and offers context as well as instruction e.g. stipulation of prompt feedback, with a 20-day maximum expected turnaround. It also covers all aspects of alignment, and governance over content and processes for staff e.g. academic standards, blend of formative and summative assessment types, and progression. Moreover, the Panel notes the student focused nature of the assessment process and the language used is predicating assessment as a learning opportunity. This is further developed in the arrangements for advisors to intervene regarding 'Students at Risk'. In addition, the SER indicates that RUW has started to post the projected grades of the students *via* the Self-Service (the online registration system) since 2016-2017 to facilitate discussion regarding progress and independent learning. The College also has an appropriate Plagiarism Policy. Overall, the Panel appreciates that the assessment policy is clear and includes summative and formative elements that both staff and students are well informed of the policy.
- 1.9 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The broad based nature of the first year offers a good basis for consolidation and diagnostic student centred study planning.
 - The programme content is relevant, with an appropriate mix of theory and practical courses.
 - The programme intended learning outcomes are compact and precise, incorporate Blooms' Taxonomy action verbs, and how they relate to specific curricular content is carefully illustrated on the Curriculum Skills Map.
 - The internship course alongside the blended nature of a design programme ensure that students are continually exposed to industry and theory relevant content.
 - Students are able to understand and communicate their educational experience in an informed way, and exhibit the attributes of independent learners.
 - The assessment policy is clear and includes summative and formative elements that both staff and students are well informed of the policy.
- 1.10 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:
- consider – for the next periodic review of the programme – that its aims contribute more directly to the achievement of RUW mission and vision
 - revise and update course content with current staff research interests incorporated, in order to foster clear research teaching linkages

- conduct the course/programme intended learning outcomes mapping, with the opportunity to emphasise critical thinking (in levels 1–3) and exploration of context (local and tectonic) in Level (4)
- revisit the definition of teaching and learning methods, and consider grouping these independently from the flow of the programme intended learning outcomes.

1.11 Judgement

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

2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 2.1 There are clear general admission policy and entry requirements, based on academic merit, the applicant's grades of high school, and the number of spaces available in the programme. Information regarding the admissions, registration, application form, and fee structure is available on the RUW website and the Student Handbook. RUW also places a minimum level for English language proficiency (IELTS overall band score of 5.5, or TOEFL: paper-based 513; or Computer-based 183; or Internet-based 65, or RUW English Placement Test overall band score of 5.5) and offers an English preparatory programme, when needed, based on the applicant's proficiency level. The Panel appreciates that the entry requirements for all the programmes offered in the College are regularly reviewed. However, the Panel received conflicting feedback on the additional admission requirements for the BA programme; while the SER and several faculty stated that these additional requirements mandate a portfolio submission, evidence provided and final confirmation received during the site visit indicate that the portfolio component is optional. The Panel is of the view that both interview and portfolio review processes, mandatory or otherwise, must have clear guidelines made available to the applicant and the interviewer. While it is understood that this is at entry level and skills will vary, a general statement on expectations and judgement criteria will prove helpful for *all* parties involved. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should clearly identify and explain its specific admission requirements, including portfolio review, to faculty members and all parties involved and on the RUW website, handbook, application form and all other relevant platforms.
- 2.2 The statistics provided indicate that the number of students registered in the programme decreased from 87 in 2012-2013 to 78 in 2015-2016. 60% of these students are Bahraini and 24% are from other member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The vast majority (90%) are enrolled as full time students. The mean length of the study period decreased from (4) in 2012-2013 to (3.2) in 2013-2014 and increased to (4.7) in 2014-2015. Students' high school GPA ranged from pass to 95.7%. Applicants are only required to show evidence of having successfully completed secondary education or its equivalent and a minimum level of English language proficiency. English orientation courses are offered to students who do not meet the minimum English level entry requirements and there were 10 students admitted in the orientation in the last three academic years. The Panel appreciates that there are remedial measures placed, at entry level, for students with weaker English skills, where students are assigned English courses and assessed again before being allowed to proceed with the programme.

- 2.3 The College's structure chart is clear in terms of department hierarchy. Roles and responsibilities of the Dean and Head of Department (HoD) are also clearly identified. According to the SER, the Dean is responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the College Council, Deans' Council and the University Senate. The Deans' Council is chaired by the Academic Vice President and is responsible for the academic direction of the institution. The Panel notes that there are clear processes in decision-making are put in place and were well explained by faculty members during interview sessions. Committees relevant to programme needs are also regularly formed. However, the Panel notes that, based on the SER and confirmed during interviews with faculty, the programme does not have a specialized programme coordinator. It was explained that two faculty members had informally assumed the overall responsibility for the curriculum as well as extracurricular activities. One of them has left the University and, no programme coordinator or manager had ever been formally appointed. The Panel was also informed that key responsibilities for HoD include curriculum development and design, evaluation of suitable assessment plans, analysis of assessed student work etc. Further, decisions regarding the programme are usually discussed among team members but eventually decided upon by the HoD, who is not an Interior Design specialist. The Panel therefore recommends that the College should formally appoint a programme coordinator in order to oversee the daily operation of the programme and to lead changes to specialist Interior Design content within the curriculum.
- 2.4 Twelve faculty members contribute in the delivery of the BAID programme. At the time of the site visit, there were two associate professors, four assistant professors, three teaching assistants and three part-time faculty members (two assistant professors and one teaching assistant). The Panel recognises the professionalism of the teaching assistants for their thorough understanding of the College, the course structure, and procedures. The Panel is however, concerned with the low number of specialist faculty teaching within the programme. The Panel was also informed, during alumnae interviews, of professors teaching outside their area of specialization at different academic levels, including senior level. The Panel received conflicting feedback from HR where it was assured that professors are teaching within their area of specialization. The Panel advises that instructors should only teach their areas of expertise. The Panel also observed a weakness in English skills at faculty members' level in some cases, which is a concern since English is the medium of instruction. Furthermore, although some faculty members assured the Panel of enough time allocated for their own development during interviews, the Panel was not provided with evidence of concrete research achievements by faculty members. The Panel is of the view that senior management should meet regularly with staff to monitor and evaluate their professional development in line with their workload and their career trajectory. The Panel also recommends that the College should hire more Interior

Design specialists and encourage the faculty members to conduct their own research projects in order to maintain and update their own academic knowledge and skills.

- 2.5 There are clear policies and procedures for recruitment, appraisal and promotion. Applications for recruitment and promotion are reviewed by the Department and approved by the College Council. The latter forwards its recommendations to the Appointment and the Promotion Committee, which is chaired by the President of RUW. The Committee takes the decision to reject or approve the Colleges' recommendations and in general, newly recruited staff are given a contract for two years. The annual appraisal of faculty members is carried out by the Dean and the HoDs. To ensure parity and consistency across colleges, RUW established an academic appraisal committee in the academic year 2013-2014 and the Panel was informed during the interviews that recently one faculty member was promoted from assistant to associate professor. There are also acceptable induction activities for newly appointed staff, and this was corroborated by interviews with senior management, and academic staff. The Panel acknowledges that the policies and procedures related to recruitment, appraisal, promotion and induction are clear and well disseminated. Nevertheless, the Panel has a concern with the staff retention rate. Although the SER states that staff retention rate was 91% for the last three academic years and that financial incentives and longer contracts of 3-5 years are offered for deserving and valued staff, the Panel notes during the site visit that the retention rate of specialized staff is low. Meetings with senior management, staff, students and alumnae verified that several academic staff resigned and the maximum duration of employment ranged from two months to maximum four years. The Panel has a concern regarding the implementation of the above procedures and advises that the College should show increased awareness of recruitment challenges when attempting to attract quality staff on a two-year tenure.
- 2.6 All RUW's policies, procedures, handbooks, manuals and administrative templates are located on the Document Management System. The PowerCampus consisting of a Student Information System (SIS) and the Self-Service system, which has been used for online registration and for teaching and learning since 2012-2013, in particular prove to be comprehensive with evidence of their functionality and usage, from registration, attendance, academic instructional material, grading, communication, academic performance monitoring etc. This was also collaborated during the site visit tour and interviews with senior managers, academic staff and students. The Panel appreciates that there are extensive information systems that allow informed decision-making and for monitoring at-risk students for early intervention.
- 2.7 RUW has a clear policy for security of learner records, which stipulates the steps taken to safeguards students' records. These steps include maintaining hard and soft copies of these records in secure locations on-campus and off-campus. RUW's Disaster

Recovery Policy also aims to protect essential data at RUW in case there is a damage to its central IT environment in the event of fire or other major incidents. Furthermore, RUW has a Grade Approval Policy, which defines clearly the responsibilities of the instructors, the HoD, the Dean, the Academic Vice President and the Registrar. The Panel acknowledges that there are appropriate policies and procedures that are consistently implemented to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results. The Panel also acknowledges that there is an adequate risk-management plan where backup is stored on multiple platforms including the Cloud as indicated during the interviews and the site visit tour.

- 2.8 During the site visit, the Panel conducted a comprehensive tour of the physical premises of RUW and those utilized by the BAID programme. The Panel notes that there are adequate numbers of classrooms, computer laboratories, studios and non-formal study areas. There is also an exhibition room, a casting room and a photography room. Classrooms and computer laboratories are well equipped with LCD projectors, screens for display and the latest versions of licensed software. The offices of administrative and academic staff are also well positioned. Both staff and students expressed their satisfaction with the facilities and the services provided. On-campus accommodations are provided for students who also have access to a gym, a swimming pool and other on-campus amenities. The Panel also notes that there are good printing facilities and sufficient work areas assigned to students within each studio. The Panel appreciates that RUW offers an excellent set up in terms of physical and material resources with state of the art equipment, suitable studio spaces and good printing facilities. Furthermore, students have access to more than 112,000 e-book and 19000 e-journals through RUW subscription in a springer link. RUW also subscribes to ProQuest database and E-brary. The Panel visited the library and was informed that each course has a list of textbooks and recommended readings that are available in the library. However, the Panel advises to keep updating the library resources and references to remain current and adequate and to include more on design theory and history.
- 2.9 There are robust systems in place for tracking usage of resources and facilities. The Self-Service is used for tracking registration, attendance, grades, financial holds and other functions. To ensure the implementation of eLearning, each college submits a report on its usage on a semester basis and the Teaching and Learning Committee has recently developed Guidelines for Blended Learning. The Librarian also issues monthly reports to monitor the usage of the library, electronic databases and 'Turnitin'. Outcomes of such reports are used to inform decision-making. For example, the Deans Council and faculty members are to improve the usage of electronic databases by setting assignments that require research and usage of RUW databases. The Panel appreciates that the tracking system is effectively employed to maximise

efficiency on different levels, from registration, academic performance, library resource usage to students' attendance.

- 2.10 There is an evident student support system throughout the institution, including library induction, academic advising as well as career advising. Faculty members are regularly providing academic advice and supervision to guide their student advisees throughout their academic journey, which keeps students on track with their studies and programme aims in general. The Panel appreciates that academic advising is well integrated at each level, which offers significant support for student academic progress. The SER reports that there has been an overall improvement in the advising process in terms of its frequency and lists several proposed initiatives to improve this process. Further, the Panel finds adequate support is provided through e-library, e-resources, events and the office of student affairs. First aid and counselling are offered through RUW clinic and the social worker. The Panel acknowledges that there is a good student support system that includes a range of options in terms of financial aid and provides students with a great opportunity. In addition, the Panel notes that there is a clear policy for students with special needs but advises adding a statement on protecting the privacy of students' medical records and conditions.
- 2.11 There are clear, thorough induction arrangements for newly admitted and transferred students. The Office of Student Affairs arranges the induction programme, which is conducted twice a year at the university level. The induction programme includes a tour of the library and other facilities in addition to information about the use of Self-Service and RUW regulations. These regulations are clearly stipulated in the student handbook and distributed to students during the induction. The College also arranges induction sessions for its students to inform them about its specific requirements and give them the opportunity to meet with faculty members and their advisors. It remains unclear, however, if the induction programme has been recently evaluated or improved, but the Panel finds the programme adequate with plans in place for students who miss induction. This was also collaborated during interviews with faculty members and students. The Panel appreciates that the induction programme is thorough and there are adequate alternative arrangements in place for students who miss the induction.
- 2.12 RUW has an Academic Advising Policy and a Procedure for academic advising that deal with students at risk of academic failure. Online and offline support systems are also in place to track students' progress and offer support with a close monitoring from registration to graduation. These systems clearly allow for a timely intervention mechanism that signals when the performance of a student drops below the required standards. The student is placed under probation and is not allowed to register for more than 12 credits per semester until the status of probation is removed. During interview sessions, faculty members confirmed that they meet more often with

students on probation in order to identify the problem and propose solutions. Mid-term results are also discussed at the College Council to identify students that need academic support. The Panel acknowledges that there is a well-implemented academic advising policy and there is a clear course of action for at-risk students.

2.13 The College's 2014-2015 Annual Report and the 2015-2016 Event Report list a number of activities that have been conducted to expand the learning environment such as, conferences, guest speakers, site visits, educational trips and exhibitions. An extensive set of evidence was also provided to demonstrate the commitment of the College to expand the learning experiences of its students. Workshops by artists and designers in particular help to enrich the students' learning experience, as students and alumnae affirmed during the interviews. Furthermore, as noted in Paragraph 2.8, RUW also provides several informal study areas. The Panel appreciates that the College environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning by allocating several informal study areas and by conducting a range of extracurricular activities.

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

- The entry requirements for all the programmes offered in the College are regularly reviewed.
- There are remedial measures placed, at entry level, for students with weaker English skills, where students are assigned English courses and assessed again before being allowed to proceed with the programme.
- There are extensive information systems that allow informed decision-making and for monitoring at-risk students for early intervention.
- RUW offers an excellent set up in terms of physical and material resources with state of the art equipment, suitable studio spaces and good printing facilities.
- The tracking system has been effectively employed to maximise efficiency on different levels, from registration, academic performance, library resource usage to attendance.
- Academic advising is well integrated at each level, which offers significant support for student academic progress.
- The induction programme is thorough and there are adequate alternative arrangements in place for students who miss the induction.
- The College environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning by allocating several informal study areas and by conducting a range of extracurricular activities.

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

- clearly identify and explain the programme specific admission requirements (including portfolio review) to faculty members and all parties involved and on the RUW website, handbook, application form and all other relevant platforms
- formally appoint a programme coordinator in order to oversee the daily operation of the programme and to lead changes to specialist Interior Design content within the curriculum
- hire more Interior Design specialists and encourage the faculty members to conduct their own research projects in order to maintain and update their own academic knowledge and skills.

2.16 **Judgement**

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

3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 3.1 Graduate attributes for RUW are clearly stated in the University's Strategic Plan; through its various Teaching and Learning documents; in an industry facing sense within the Employability Strategy and in some detail in the Student Experience Strategy. Attributes include life-long learning, leadership, initiative, engagement (social) and creativity. These in turn are embedded within the programme and course ILOs reflecting the capability of the discipline of Interior Design to act as a vehicle for the acquisition of a range of skills. The onsite visit with alumnae and students underlined the centrality of the attributes within the student body. The Panel notes that the institution is clearly engaged in reflective practice and has systems of revalidation and capacity to adjust delivery to enhance the student experience and to closer align all elements of its provision. The Panel also notes that there is a variety of reliable assessment tools that are used to ensure graduate attributes. Overall, the Panel appreciates that graduate attributes are embedded within the learning outcomes and are ensured using assessments, which are valid and reliable.
- 3.2 The (2014) RUW Benchmarking Policy, is appropriate and offers outline description of purpose and scope, as well as procedural guidance. Current benchmarking is aligned with the policy; however, the scope of the process is limited. Some benchmarking e.g. against Middlesex University predates the inception of a formal policy by a considerable time. The Panel notes that formal and rigorous benchmarking has yet to take place. The SER states that RUW awaits HEC approval on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (for benchmarking and collaboration more broadly). While recognizing that the teaching team and management embody significant international and regional experience, the Panel is of the view that strategic benchmarking nationally, regionally and internationally, is undertaken at the earliest opportunity, not least to support the highly laudable sentiment included in the RUW Interior Design Feasibility Study Report. According to this report, 'RUW strongly believes that local graduates can deliver better design as they are inherently familiar with the locally available resources, culture of Bahrain, traditional crafts, local taste of color palette etc.'. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that more strategic processes of benchmarking take place and to expand its benchmarking activities to include items such as admission policy, resources, programme's outcomes and academic standards. Moreover, the Panel encourages faculty to engage in external examining and similar activities in order to diversify methods of gauging delivery at a more granular level.

- 3.3 The Assessment Policy states that the responsibility for overseeing and recording quality of assessment rests in part with the Deans' Council, the College Council and the Teaching and Learning Committee. Assessment moderation takes place in the form of second marking, internal moderation, external examiner contribution, industry placement supervision (in consultation with internship providers) and there is a clear set of policies covering appeals, academic misconduct etc. All these policies and procedures are provided online and at student induction, and expanded upon in the student handbook. The Panel notes that the assessment process is published broadly *via* email, physical notice boards and on the Self-Service system. Review of course specifications including assessment details is conducted by instructors, who supply modified course specifications to the HoD and then, *via* College Council, to the Dean. After the Council's approval they are published on the Self-Service. Changes to ILOs or the introduction of new course specifications are subject to review by the Teaching and Learning Council and students are notified of all changes in programme content at the start of their courses. The Panel appreciates that policies and procedures of assessment are consistently implemented *via* a series of appropriate checks and balances.
- 3.4 There are clear mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes, which include review by the HoD of the course specifications. The Panel advises that such quality assurance be maintained more broadly through the Teaching and Learning Committee to embed ownership of standards across the teaching team. The Panel notes the design of the course specifications that include the mapping of CILOs with teaching methods and assessments. This ensures that both students and staff can see exactly how ILOs are being assessed. External moderation/verification is an additional method of ensuring proper alignment and the Panel did not find evidence of inconsistency. For example, the course specification for IDN 382 indicates that assessment components are all covering relevant CILOs and clearly mapped in section 16. The Panel appreciates that there are clear mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment with outcomes to assure the academic standards of the graduates.
- 3.5 Internal moderation is governed by the RUW's Assessment Policy. According to it, pre-assessment moderation of written examinations is carried out by the HoD and faculty members should ensure that all assessment tasks are checked preferably with academic colleagues prior to being distributed to students. The Panel also notes that there are clear internal post-assessment moderation processes. Interviews with the senior management team and faculty confirmed a consistent approach to both the sample of work moderated and who moderated the work. The Panel was informed during faculty interviews that moderators are selected based on their specialist knowledge and new faculty are supported through the internal moderation process by second markers as part of their induction. Moreover, there is a system for variance

in second marking, where the HoD and Dean are called upon to resolve the issue and the matter is further discussed at the College Council. Staff are clear on the systems that are in place and there was evidence of rigour when distributing grade details to students. The Panel appreciates that there is an effective system for variance in second marking and that new faculty members are supported by second markers as part of their induction. Interviews with faculty also evidenced that group moderation often occurred which is likely to lead to informal discussion and informal change. The Panel is of the view that whilst this is a valid form of quality control, it would benefit from formal recording. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the policy and procedures related to pre-assessment moderation and maintain a systematic recording of important pre and post moderation comments, particularly accounting for adjustment of marks and overall impression of grades achieved.

- 3.6 The Panel notes, from interviews with the senior management team, that there is a clear procedure for the external moderation, which covers second marking and external verification. While Edexcel externally verifies all courses at the foundation level, external examiners carry out the verification and second marking of 30% of the courses at other levels. The Panel notes that there is a robust system for evaluating choice of external examiners and that the external examiners interviewed were qualified in terms of being either practitioners or academics. However, from interviews conducted during the site visit, there appeared to be some evidence of inconsistencies with regard to external examiners' input and their capability to achieve an 'overview' of the body of work produced by students on the programme and effectively report on this sample. Moreover, these interviews verified that external examiners usually do not see the same course twice and do not get a formal response from the College in response to their comments. The Panel is of the view that the role of the external examiner should be a cumulative one (it is a role appreciated by those currently in position). The growing familiarity with the trajectory of a programme enables external examiners to build a consolidated knowledge of course output and offer observations beyond the process of assessment. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that written feedback is given in response to the external examiners' reports and extend the period of service where possible, to enable external examiners to see the same course repeatedly, year-on-year. This would close the loop in relation to programme development and build a stronger and more productive relationship between the external examiners and the College.
- 3.7 The Panel was provided with ample of students work. From students work exhibited on campus, samples of marked students work included in the course files, it is evidenced that the level of students' achievement, particularly in the final year, and in areas of 'making', are comparable with other programmes locally, regionally and internationally. The Level 1 project samples provided included a thorough record of primarily process-driven design evolution, from concept and mood, using simple

devices to evolve a language of form. The approach to the typology, and the trajectory of the design could have benefitted from more critical rigour (a postmodern critique or reference points may have been helpful); however, at this level, it was a thorough collection of drawings and models. The Level 2 work was similarly aligned, but exhibited more evidence of technical resolution. Level 3 sample material was firmly rooted in the orthographic drawings supplemented by a fairly comprehensive report which covered aspects of the design proposal including technical matters, space planning and materiality. This was principally offered in a non-critical way, and would have benefitted from more rigorous exploration of the process of creating such a space, and critical engagement with rejected material as well as that, which was resolved. This 'critical' capability is an aspect that employers are keen to see in prospective staff. Finally, the sample of work contains a Level 4 project, which was in the form of a report. While this was clearly lifted into a more refined territory, there is an unexplored opportunity to bring regional or contextual definition and detail to the project. The specifics of where such a space is located (Bahrain/Gulf Region) and the cultural, geographic and climatic influences on its form, organization and definition appear overly obscured or neutralized. The Panel recommends that the College should identify opportunities for clearer expression of context, which is considered an important aspect of the study of Interior Design at the RUW.

- 3.8 According to the SER, currently the achievement of PILOs is measured through the mapping of the assessments to the PILOs. In the next phase, the achievement of the PILOs will be measured through the mapping of CILOs to PILOs. Since 2013-2014, RUW has developed and implemented a mechanism to evaluate the achievement of CILOs and the evidence provided demonstrates great achievement with almost 100% of all PILOs. As indicated in the paragraph above, the Panel was provided with ample of students work and finds the level of achievement is commensurate with similar programmes. The Panel also notes that spread of marks is broad and there is good evidence of the high bands (A's and B's) being used where appropriate. Moreover, the alumnae interviewed were satisfied with the quality of graduate skills and the Exit Survey reports from 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 are broadly positive. These surveys also indicate that (from the surveys returned) there could be more emphasis on entrepreneurial thinking (a graduate attribute). However, the proportion of returns is unclear and the split of data is uncharacteristically weighted (disagree, neutral, agree). Overall, the Panel appreciates that the levels of achievement are as set out in the PILOs and CILOs.
- 3.9 Cohort analysis from 2005 is consistent and useful and shows a healthy scale of cohort, stabilised around 75+ students. This reflects the growth in the interest in the subject generally, and the growth of the practice in an economy such as Bahrain's. The figures for withdrawal are also relatively small ($\leq 5\%$) which is also a useful sign that the fit of student to programme offer is good, and students are having a good quality

educational experience when join the College, reflected in high retention rates. First destinations were less clear with no detailed evaluative data, though there was indication of some recruitment directly to related fields of design, and some students going on to pursue masters level study. The Panel is of the view (as indicated elsewhere in this Report), that more rigorous data capturing is undertaken in order to ensure competitiveness and to provide a clearer picture of what is a growing field within the Bahraini academic landscape. The Panel also noted inconsistency and inaccuracy in the graphs provided in the SER. During a meeting with senior management, they verified that there was an inconsistency between Cohort Analysis of the Interior Design programme and the paragraph written below it in the SER. The Panel found similar examples throughout the SER. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should investigate ways to improve consistent quality control of data and the tracking of the programme graduates' destinations.

- 3.10 The assessment policy for the compulsory 200-hour Internship/work-based learning is clear and is governed by rigorous reporting, monitoring and discussion at committee level. This aspect of the RUW provision is an obvious area of strength and further opportunity. Employers were engaged with the process, including assessment and were able to demonstrate clear knowledge of the process and value of taking students into their working environments and students were enthusiastic about their experiences. Feedback from students and employers evidenced a positive experience from both employer and internee. The greater level of detail in the report for IDN 496 offered a broad analysis of the host company. From student reports and presentations, the role of work based learning and curriculum embedded work experience was clear; this was supported by onsite interviews. The Panel recognizes the value and nature of the Internship component of the programme and advises that the range of partner organisations is enhanced and extended, in order to capitalise on the enthusiasm for this aspect of the programme and the growth (both actual and potential) of the same. Ideally, this would include both national and regional opportunities for students.
- 3.11 The Final Year Project (IDN 497) has clearly defined supervision roles and procedures outlined in the Final Project Handbook. Student responsibilities are also stated and faculty were able to describe how supervisory roles were managed during onsite interviews. The procedures and policies are appropriate and lay out in detail useful support structures for students, who, traditionally in creative contexts, require careful management of such work, in order that it impacts most productively, or compliments their studio based output. The Panel acknowledges the clarity of the handbook, and its student centred focus. Monitoring is conducted on a weekly basis (minimum) supplemented with an interim formal review, and final submission incorporates a jury presentation of the text-based component as well as the closing exhibition/degree show of artefacts; this is an example of best practice. The Panel appreciates that the

final year project is managed properly and students are continuously monitored and appropriately assessed.

- 3.12 The College Advisory Committee has been established since 2010-2011, with longstanding and important input into the evolution of the College's programmes. It has academic representation from each specialist cognate area and is chaired by the Dean of the College. The Mandate of the College Advisory Committee outlines its role as including matters ranging from curriculum development to work placement and industry links, as well as links with the public sector and content development (including technological). This is a broad and appropriate remit. It convenes a minimum of once per semester and can accept additional input as per college requirement. This interface between academia and industry informs programme decision making *via* the committee structure and from examples offered; discussions seem appropriately weighted towards curriculum tuning. This ranged from suitability of University preparation for industry through to profile of the programmes in reflecting 'Arab Culture' and regional specificity. The most recent minutes contained much discussion regarding plans, but lacked in specific 'actions' for the members. The Panel recognises the enthusiasm for engagement exhibited by the Advisory Committee, and advises that it channels this in a more structured way. Moreover, from the interview with the management team, it seemed unclear how the board was selected in the case of duplicate skills. The Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement a clear policy on the selection procedure and criteria of candidates for the College Advisory Committee.
- 3.13 The Graduate Exit Survey introduced in 2012-2013 offers a vehicle for alumnae to feedback on their experience. Interviews with alumnae and detail from the College Alumnae Survey Analysis indicated a low response rate (15% for the University and 12.5% for the College), though responses from graduates were generally positive. The onsite interview with alumnae represented a good cross-section of post RUW experience, including those in employment, undertaking further study e.g. masters and currently looking for employment. The samples of the analysis of the conducted surveys also indicate key initiatives, such as updating current alumnae lists, development of alumnae trackers and, importantly including alumnae as part of the College Advisory Committee, which are positive. However, the Panel considers the response rate to be too low, and not sufficiently profiled for the College, to gauge any trends or inform policy. The Employers interviewed during the site visit were also largely positive about the quality of graduates. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that the College should develop more efficient mechanisms for distributing, harvesting and analysing data (from surveys etc.) to help improve planning, decision making and strategy for programme development and enhancement, as indicated in paragraph 4.8.

3.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- Graduate attributes are embedded within the learning outcomes and are ensured using assessments, which are valid and reliable.
- Policies and procedures of assessment are consistently implemented *via* a series of appropriate checks and balances.
- There are clear mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment with outcomes to assure the academic standards of the graduates
- New faculty are supported through the internal moderation process by second markers as part of their induction.
- There is an effective system for variance in second marking to further ensure consistent and appropriateness of assessment.
- The levels of achievement are as set out in the intended learning outcomes of the courses and the programme.
- The final year project is managed properly and students are continuously monitored and appropriately assessed.

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

- ensure that more strategic processes of benchmarking take place and to expand its benchmarking activities to include items such as admission policy, resources, programme's outcomes and academic standards
- revise the policy and procedures related to pre-assessment moderation and maintain a systematic recording of important pre and post moderation comments
- ensure that written feedback is given in response to the external examiners' reports and extend the period of service where possible, to enable external examiners to see the same course repeatedly, year-on-year
- identify opportunities for clearer expression of context, which is considered an important aspect of the study of Interior Design at the RUW
- investigate ways to improve consistent quality control of data and the tracking the programme graduates' destinations
- develop and implement a clear policy on the selection procedure of candidates for the College Advisory Committee.

3.16 **Judgement**

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

4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 4.1 There are clear institutional policies and regulations pertaining to the programme and its delivery, which are available to staff and students through various online and offline platforms, such as student and programmes handbooks, and university guidelines. The Panel notes the continuous improvement of these policies recognising that many are effectively and consistently implemented across the College as per evidence. Nevertheless, interviews with senior management, staff and external stakeholders showed a misalignment in the consistent, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of plagiarism and grievance within the programme, as per policies and evidence provided. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that policies and procedures relevant to plagiarism and grievance are properly disseminated and consistently implemented at the programme level.
- 4.2 The organizational chart shows a clear management system at the University and at the College level. The managerial structure includes the Dean and the HoD; however, as indicated in paragraph 4.1, there is a deficiency in the effective and consistent implementation and monitoring of several policies due to the absence of a programme coordinator. During interviews with faculty members there seems to be ‘informal programme coordinators’ for the BAID programme. However, this does not provide a platform for programme leadership. The Panel is of the view that the College should formally appoint a programme coordinator in order to be responsible for the academic direction of the programme and lead curriculum changes within the Interior Design programme (see recommendation in paragraph 2.3).
- 4.3 There is a clear quality assurance management system, which includes student and staff surveys, internship, annual reviews of courses, audit course folders, examiners’ reports and minuted meetings. These arrangements were developed by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit and there are clear guidelines for quality management. Furthermore, the SER indicates that RUW has a ‘Framework for Academic Quality’ to streamline the monitoring of academic quality, which has been implemented since 2014-2015. Evidence also verifies that there is a detailed policy on the quality assurance management system on the final year capstone project, which is the graduation project of BAID students, and combines research and design practice skills and knowledge. The Panel appreciates that there is an implemented quality assurance management system, which provides valuable input into the programme.

- 4.4 The Panel notes that staff were encouraged to participate in Report Capacity Building Workshops and National Qualifications Framework Mapping in order to build onto their quality assurance skills, as minuted in College Council meetings and listed in personal development annual reports. The interviews and evidence also show that many faculty members have international experience. During the interviews with staff and senior management and according to policies and procedures outlined in evidence, each explained their roles and responsibilities, which include ensuring that students have the appropriate pre-requisites, the alignment of the CILOs to PILOs, assessment criteria and adhering to syllabus requirements. In general, the Panel appreciates that academics and support staff have a detailed understanding of quality assurance and their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision.
- 4.5 RUW has a Programme Proposal and Modification Policy, which clearly outlines the followed procedures for modifying existing programmes or introducing a new one. According to the SER, this policy is based on the HEC's regulatory guidelines and the HEC's prescribed templates are used in proposing new programmes. The evidence provided includes the letter of approval and the proposal of the Architecture programme, Master's programme in Design Management and Masters in Fine Arts to HEC, which indicates the college's adherence to the related policy and procedures. Such procedures ensure the programmes are relevant, fit for purpose, and comply with existing regulations. Nonetheless, in meetings, senior management and staff could not describe effectively the ethos of the University and the programme. The Panel advises that understanding and aligning the ethos of the new programmes to the University and to the College's mission is important for programmes' development. The meeting with senior management also verified that the Masters and the Architecture programmes that were recently offered are based on market needs. The Panel acknowledges that there are suitable arrangements for introducing new programmes in the University.
- 4.6 There are arrangements for annual internal programme evaluation, which include a review of the course specifications, Programme Handbook, textbooks, references, needed software and human resources. There are also annual students and alumnae surveys, external examiners' reports, evaluation surveys for internship, courses and staff. The Panel notes that the information gathered from the different sources feeds into the annual operational plan of the College, which is aligned with the University strategic objectives and includes key performance indicators. The Panel appreciates that there are arrangements available for the internal evaluation of the programme that inform the decision taken to improve the programme and feed into the annual operational plan. As per meetings with students and alumnae, the Panel also notes that there is an improvement of facilities that was carried out in response to the last feedback received from students and alumnae surveys. The Panel appreciates that there is a continuous improvement of the programme, especially with improving the

academic quality framework and the improvement of student experience. Nevertheless, during interviews with senior management and staff and through evidence provided the Panel noted inconsistencies in the evaluation and the implementation of the feedback gathered from several sources. For example, in a meeting, senior management verified that they share the feedback that they receive from external examiners with specialist staff; in another meeting specialist staff believed that, they never received the report. The meeting minutes indicate discussion of exit surveys programme review, and teacher evaluation during a course review meeting, but there is no evidence on how this information is discussed, evaluated, monitored and implemented by the specialist programme staff. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the annual operational plan is discussed with all the relevant stakeholders and there is a follow up report to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented improvements.

- 4.7 RUW has a Periodic Programme Review Policy that was developed and approved in 2015 in order to formalize the internal periodic review process. It indicates that both the internal and the external periodic review of all programmes will be carried at a minimum once every four years according to a rolling schedule, that is approved by the Deans Council. Evidence provided includes the self-evaluation report submitted by the College for the Fashion Design Programme to an internal panel chaired by the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the suggestions made for improvements. The SER refers to the periodic reviews of the programmes in consultation with HEC and WVU. The Panel notes the informal documentation of the regular input from the WVU, which led to an increase in the programme credit hours from 120 to 132. The Panel appreciates that the periodic review conducted by the College with an external element that led to many improvements in the programme such as making the internship compulsory and changing the capstone from a 1-hour supervision project to a full-year scheduled subject with a research component in the first semester and an application in the second semester. The Panel also acknowledges that there is now a formal process to moderate final project for Interior Design and there is a formal selection process. In interviews with senior management staff, it was unclear however how the internal curriculum review occurred. This, together with benchmarking, is a vital process to ensure correct balance in the curriculum. The Panel advises the College to ensure that the periodic programme review process is more transparent and that it allows the Interior Design specialist team to reflect on the balance of subjects and skills across the whole curriculum. The Panel also notes the diversity of employment opportunities for graduates and students. The Panel advises the programme to reflect this diversity in their curriculum during their periodic reviews, in order to expose students to new skills and increase the scope for students' employment opportunities as well as industry and community engagement.

- 4.8 Interviews with senior management and with staff verified that there are formal mechanisms for collecting structured comments from stakeholders such as surveys, Advisory Committee's minutes and the reports of external moderators. The student meeting verified that evaluation surveys were received for every single course at the end of the semester and the Panel was informed that once a semester students go to a questions and answers session with the President. The Panel notes the analysis of the alumnae and student surveys and acknowledges the College's response to the alumnae and employers' comments. However, it is unclear how the collected comments are holistically analyzed and implemented and how the outcomes are shared with stakeholders. For example, external stakeholders verified that they have shared their concerns about students' skills and the complexity of the project work but there was no follow up meeting or response from the University on their feedback. The members of the College Advisory Committee also raised their concern that they are passionate about recommending improvements to the programme but there is no opportunity to share their input during the College Advisory Committee meetings due to the limited time of the meeting and the pre-set agenda. Furthermore, they were also unaware how their input is evaluated and contributes to improvement in the programme. The Panel recommends that the College should implement formal mechanisms to ensure that the structured comments collected from meetings and surveys are analysed effectively, and that the outcomes are used to inform decisions and are made available to the stakeholders.
- 4.9 RUW has a clear Professional Development Policy, which aims to encourage the career progression of its faculty members and enhance their capabilities. The Panel notes the current arrangements to identify continuing professional development needs for all staff through allocated funds and a list of activities, workshops, conferences, seminars, and guest speakers. The Panel appreciates that there are various professional development arrangements organized by RUW, including the international conference, where five staff presented their research and contributed to their professional development. Another interesting aspect for the Panel to note was the 3D printing workshop with staff from WVU, which harmonized with College investment in a new 3D printing facility onsite. In addition, the Panel notes that if one faculty member wishes to plan their career trajectory, it is communicated at the College Council, and then an approval of the staff's personal development is based on research themes. These themes are selected at a college level and as per collaboration with external stakeholders. Senior management and staff also verified that the approval of staff's professional development is made through various committees in line with the general themes selected by the College Council. The Panel suggests that the subject of research approval according to themes could be an added clause to the policy to inform staff about this condition and ensure equity during assessment of conference applications.

- 4.10 With regard to improving teaching performance of faculty members, evidence provided indicates the use of in-class observation methods. The Panel advises that more effective and productive teaching and learning practices are implemented to improve staff's teaching and learning performance, such as design teaching workshops/seminars and short courses or other supportive methods. This was identified by RUW in its Annual Plan for Capacity Building. Furthermore, the Panel suggests that staff be enabled to practice within their domain; participate in design exhibitions/competitions and offer consultancy services, where appropriate, in order to maintain and develop practical and critical experience and in return, to fold this into the student experience. During meetings with staff, the Panel noted that staff viewed professional development opportunities provided to them positively. Furthermore, the Panel notes that there is an implemented process to monitor the staff professional development and assigned KPIs in the College operational plan. The Panel appreciates that there is an implemented professional development policy for academic staff and the process is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.
- 4.11 According to the SER, the Advisory Committee, the internship reports and alumnae provide the College with valuable feedback on labour market needs. It also refers to the College effort to embed employability skills in its courses to ensure that the BAID programme is up to date as per market requirements. The Panel notes that the minuted agenda from the College Advisory Committee and comments from external stakeholders and alumnae provide written feedback. As per meetings with external stakeholders and Advisory Committee minutes, the Panel also acknowledges that there are currently plans in order to organize events outside of the University such as pop-up exhibitions, which will keep the staff, and the programme up-to-date of local design practices. However, the SER does not demonstrate clearly how labour market needs are reported; some of the graphs are inconsistent and the information does not provide clear indicators of the graduating students and the supply/demand of Interior Design students. Furthermore, evidence could not be found to support a follow-up report or documentation during the internship with the employer. The Panel advises that the internship report be revised to be used to make recommendations on the improvement of the students' employability skills. The Panel is also of the view that the programme should discuss and implement a planned community and industry engagement to inform programme development. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should formally scope the market needs and intensify its industry engagement through a systematic plan and clear indicators.
- 4.12 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- There is an implemented quality assurance management system, which provides valuable input into the programme.

- Academics and support staff have a good understanding of quality assurance and their role in the process.
- There are arrangements available for the internal evaluation of the programme that inform the decision taken to improve the programme and feed into the annual operational plan.
- There is a continuous improvement of the programme, especially with improving the academic quality framework and the improvement of student experience.
- There are various professional development arrangements organized by RUW, including the international conference, where five staff presented their research and contributed to their professional development.
- There is an implemented professional development policy for academic staff and the process is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis.

4.13 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- ensure that policies and procedures relevant to plagiarism and grievance are properly disseminated and consistently implemented at the programme level
- ensure that the annual operational plan is discussed with all the relevant stakeholders and there is a follow up report to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented improvements
- implement formal mechanisms to ensure that the structured comments collected from meetings and surveys are analysed correctly and that the outcomes are used to inform decisions and are made available to the stakeholders
- formally scope the market needs and intensify its industry engagement through a systematic plan and clear indicators.

4.14 **Judgement**

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

5. Conclusion

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

There is Confidence in the Bachelor of Arts in Interior Design of College of Art and Design offered by the Royal University for Women.