



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

# Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Institutional Review Report

**Royal University for Women  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 14 -18 October 2018**

HI004-C2-R001

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## Acronyms

AVP	Academic Vice President
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BoT	Board of Trustees
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CE	Community Engagement
CGIU	Career Guidance and Internship Unit
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DCR	Document Control Register
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DMS	Document Management System
EXCO	Executive Committee
HEC	Higher Education Council
HR	Human Resources
HoDs	Heads of Departments
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OR	Office of Registrar
PD	Professional Development
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAU	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit
QA&E	Quality Assurance and Enhancement
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
WVU	West Virginia University

## 1. Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews where the whole institution is assessed; and Programmes Reviews where the quality of learning and academic standards are judged in specific programmes. The DHR has completed the first cycle of the Institutional Reviews in 2013, and the second cycle is scheduled for 2018-2019, in accordance with the Institutional Quality Review Framework (cycle 2) approved by the Cabinet (Resolution No. 38 of 2015).

The three main objectives of institutional reviews are:

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

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

Table 1: Overall Judgements

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

## 2. The Institution Profile

Institution Name	Royal University for Women
Type of the Institution	Private University
Year of Establishment	2002
Institution Approval Number	Ministry of Education Decision 2002/ غ ج ر/146/
Location	Riffa, Kingdom of Bahrain
Number of Colleges	4
Names of Colleges	1. Art and Design 2. Business and Financial Sciences 3. Law 4. Engineering
Number of Bachelor Qualifications	10
Number of Postgraduate Qualifications	2
Cross-Border Programme(s)	1
Number of Enrolled Current Students	672
Number of Graduates since inception	996
Number of Academic Staff Members	41
Number of Administrative Staff Members	54
Previous Institutional Review Date	18-21 January 2009
Date of SER submission	25 June 2018
Date of Site Visit	14-18 October 2018

### 3. Judgment Summary

**The Institution's Judgement: Meets QA requirements**

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgment
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>Mission, Governance and Management</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 1	Mission	Addressed
Indicator 2	Governance and Management	Addressed
Indicator 3	Strategic Plan	Addressed
Indicator 4	Organizational Structure	Addressed
Indicator 5	Management of Academic Standards:	Addressed
Indicator 6	Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education	Addressed
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Quality Assurance and Enhancement</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 7	Quality Assurance	Addressed
Indicator 8	Benchmarking and Surveys	Addressed
Indicator 9	Security of Learner Records and Certification	Addressed
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 10	Learning Resources	Addressed
Indicator 11	ICT	Addressed
Indicator 12	Infrastructure	Addressed
<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>The Quality of Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 13	Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes	Addressed
Indicator 14	Admissions	Addressed
Indicator 15	Introduction and Review of Programmes	Addressed

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

## 4. Standards and Indicators

### Standard 1

#### Mission, Governance and Management

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

#### Indicator 1: Mission

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

The Royal University for Women (RUW) mission and vision statements appear on the university's website and are also stated in other documents including the 'Strategic Plan' document. The mission identifies the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. The mission and vision statements inform the strategic plan, which is aligned with the national strategies of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The vision of RUW is to become 'the regional leader in academic excellence for women'. The strategic plan builds on this statement by noting that the ethos of the institution is to 'support the aspirations of women'. During the site visit, the Panel learned about how the aspiration for the institution to become a regional leader in academic excellence for women could play out in practice. The Panel was informed, for example, that the aim of the institution is to educate women in order to empower them to play significant roles in the workforce. This focus on preparing women for the world of work is played out in the programmes offered at the institution. The Panel was also informed of the university's wish to be seen as an institution advocating for women and researching issues central to women's lives. To this end, there is interest in establishing a 'Centre for Women's Studies' in order to support research conducted in this area.

The Panel notes that although the name of the institution is the 'Royal University for Women', there is no mention of women in the mission statement; yet the vision does indicate a focus on them. However, a newly introduced programme in 'Civil Engineering' admits men as well as women with the result that the concept of a university 'for Women' is challenged. The University is encouraged to consider the way concepts used, or not used, in a name and a mission statement serves to guide and shape an institution as it moves forward and consider how more clarity on the institutional focus could be achieved. Furthermore, although the Executive Committee (EXCO) and the Board of Trustees (BoT) had approved the mission and vision statements, there is no evidence that they had also been subjected to broader consultation with other stakeholders as they were developed. Moreover, there is a formal document entitled 'Procedure for the

Periodic Revision of University Mission and Vision', which states that reviews are to be conducted periodically, but it provides no guidance with regard to the time that can pass between reviews. The document states that 'reviews are conducted upon the decision of the President and the BoT'. A decision was taken to review the mission and vision in 2013, and the Panel was informed that consultation with stakeholders took place during this process. The Mission and the Vision statements were deemed fit for purpose as a result of the review, a decision ratified by EXCO and the BoT.

Given the statements made in the vision, mission and strategic plan, the Panel is of the view that the Institution satisfies the requirements of this Indicator, and could benefit from a more rigorous and documented form of consultation. Such consultation should include female students, female staff and other female stakeholders. Although a consultation might simply affirm statements made about women, elaborations related to what these might mean in practice could emerge with the result that the University would be guided in the realisation of its goals and thus in ensuring that it is 'fit for purpose'.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Clearly identify a time frame for periodical mission review and put in place procedures to ensure that future reviews involve formal consultation with a more comprehensive set of stakeholders, in particular women.

#### **Indicator 2: Governance and Management**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

Clear terms of reference for the BoT are stated in Article 5 of RUW's 'Internal Policy'. The 'Internal Policy' also lays out the responsibilities and duties of the President and deputies, the Senate, Deans, the Deans' Council, and others, indicating a clear separation of duties between the governing body and management. Procedures for the appointment and induction of members of the BoT are provided in the Internal Policy. The Panel was also provided with evidence of the induction of BoT's members and of the recording of attendance at meetings. Minutes of meetings were also made available to the Panel. Other documentation such as the organizational chart and the staff orientation presentation support the identification of a separation of duties between the governing body, the BoT, and the university's management. As a result of the site visit, the Panel was able to affirm that a clear separation of duties does exist.

RUW has developed a very detailed 'Finance and Accounting Manual' that explicates the budgeting process. The budgeting process is explained in the Manual as a mean of allocating 'resources, including capital, people and facilities . . . in order to accomplish the goals and objectives set by the Board for the University'. Budgeting is thus understood as a link between

strategic planning and quality and the budgeting process involves colleges submitting their budgets in order to cater for their needs. Consequently, the link between strategic planning, resource and financial allocations and the quality of programme offerings is dependent on the colleges' understanding of strategic goals and on the link between strategy and requests for resources being taken into account by the colleges in their preparation of budget submissions. During the site visit, the Panel noticed that awareness of the strategic goals of the Institution existed at all levels and that these were taken into account in the preparation of budgets.

The 'Finance and Accounting Manual' provides clarity on the delegation of authority in the form of a 'Responsibility Assignment Matrix'. In addition, the Manual identifies very clear procedures to prevent and detect fraud. External auditors are appointed annually and a full time internal auditor is employed to maintain internal control of all financial matters, where preparations for the audit they are required to conduct and the way their report should be processed are explained in the Manual. Financial controls are thus clearly delineated in the Manual, whose procedures are strictly adhered to, as was confirmed to the Panel during interviews, and any deviations from procedures were documented and subjected to audit. Hence, the Panel agrees that the Institution addresses the requirements of this Indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

None

#### **Indicator 3: Strategic Plan**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

RUW has a clear strategic plan as appears in the provided evidence. The SER describes how the development of the plan took into account the Higher Education Council (HEC) regulations and various other national documents. According to the SER, the Plan was 'discussed and approved' in the Senate and was also disseminated to all staff and students *via* the website. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with clear evidence that stakeholders at various levels of the institution were aware of the high-level goals detailed in the plan. However, evidence of actual discussions as the plan was being developed was not available although insights from surveys at lower levels of the Institution were used to inform its development. Consultation with stakeholders thus took place indirectly through the use of these surveys.

The strategic plan does not have annual targets or Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Rather, KPIs are identified at lower levels as a result of the development of annual operational plans at the colleges level. The achievement of these KPIs is then measured using a 'balanced scorecard' process. Evidence of scorecard reports appearing on the agenda of these bodies was provided.

Scorecard reports, generated at the end of each semester, sometimes, identify goals for improvement, which are then added to operational plans. Scorecard reports are discussed at the Senior Management Committee (SMC) and Senate before going to EXCO and the BoT. Although improvement goals are identified and added to operational plans, there is no evidence of these being used to review the strategic plan itself. Monitoring implementation of the goals of the strategic plan therefore takes place at lower levels of the institution and not through the identification of KPIs in the Plan itself. There is, however, rigorous development and monitoring of annual operational plans and hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Include formal consultations with a range of stakeholders, in the next review of the Strategic Plan.
- Include measurable KPIs at the institutional level to better facilitate monitoring and implementation of goals and targets, in the next review of the Strategic Plan.

#### **Indicator 4: Organizational Structure**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

Effective coordination and management is achieved by means of a committee structure consisting of the Senate and various senate standing committees established for specific purposes. The Senate meets once per month. During the site visit, the Panel learned that membership is open to all members of the academic staff and includes the President of the Student Council. The Panel also noted that the senate standing committees meet at least once per month with more meetings as needed. Terms of reference for standing committees exist and the role of the Senate is outlined in the 'Internal Policy'. The Deans' Council, college councils and departmental meetings are also there as platforms for decision-making, coordination, and leadership tasks and roles. Furthermore, RUW has an SMC, consisting of the President, the Vice-President, the Head of Finance and the Head of Human Resources (HR), which deals with administrative and academic issues. In interviews, the Panel heard that the SMC has now been replaced by a more inclusive President's Cabinet, consisting of all Deans and heads of units that meets once per month.

The Panel notes that although committees are well-regulated, there is no check of their performance against their terms of reference nor measurement of their effectiveness. Moreover, although the extensive committee structure in place at RUW might facilitate communication, the University might still want to consider how attendance at committee meetings impacts the time of staff, especially since many staff members appear to serve on more than one committee. This consideration would include how participation in the committee structure impacts the time

available for other tasks, such as research. The Institution should also monitor committees' performance against their terms of reference.

RUW has developed job descriptions for all posts that clearly set out responsibilities and lines of reporting and management. Staff members sign a job description document upon appointment, in order to signal their understanding of their duties and position within the institution. In interviews, it was confirmed that staff members are aware of their job descriptions and the responsibilities allocated to them. There is also a 'Substitution Matrix', which clearly identifies alternates for all key positions within the Institution in cases of absence and ensures effective coordination and leadership. Although RUW has a chart of its organisational structure, there are different versions of this chart that were apparent in different locations. The Panel is of the view that the University needs to ensure that a uniform version of the chart is provided in all locations.

The SER states that the Student Council is invited to meet with the BoT, but the regularity of these meetings is not clear, as indicated by the supporting evidence. The SER also stated that students are also invited to College Councils. However, during the site visit interviews and other interactions with the Panel, students confirmed that interactions with individual managers and formal management structures were frequent and that their ability to offer opinions and provide input on matters that affected them was not constrained in any way.

Overall, as in other areas of institutional functioning, the committee structure at RUW is well defined. Terms of reference for all committees are available. Furthermore, committees produce an annual plan consisting of goals and targets at the beginning of each academic year and report on achievement against the plan at the end of each year. The 'Annual Objective' document also identifies additional objectives for committees and a check on the keeping of minutes is in place. Hence, the Panel agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Develop measures to evaluate the effectiveness of committees, to determine whether the number of meetings are actually required and to check their performance against their terms of reference.
- Ensure that there is only one version of the organizational chart available and that it is easily accessible by all stakeholders.

#### **Indicator 5: Management of Academic Standards**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

According to the SER, the Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for monitoring and maintaining academic standards. The Panel learned from interviews that other structures including the College Councils and the Deans' Council are also concerned with academic

standards. RUW also has an extensive policy structure regulating and guiding aspects of academic life including policies that ensure compliance with HEC regulations regarding programmes. Moreover, the SER cites student feedback surveys, question and answer sessions and meetings of the Student Council with the BoT in relation to the maintenance of academic standards. However, the Panel is of the view that students' satisfaction with their programmes of study and the teaching offered by an institution is not necessarily an indication of the maintenance of academic standards.

The Student Handbook contains sections on academic misconduct and other disciplinary offences and a 'Student Disciplinary Committee' exists in order to deal with both academic and non-academic matters of misconduct. According to the SER, cases of misconduct have decreased in recent years and this is cited as an indication of the success of initiatives intended to raise students' awareness of issues related to misconduct. A 'Plagiarism Policy' exists, which applies only to students and assigns offences to different categories according to their severity. The Student Disciplinary Committee is *ad hoc* in the sense that it deals with specific cases of students who have committed an offence and minutes of these *ad hoc* meetings do exist. There is also an appeals' procedure to be used when students have been found guilty of cases of misconduct as detailed in the Student Handbook.

Cases of misconduct on the part of the staff are handled by using the HR Policies, which state that the 'University expects all employees to act honestly, conscientiously, reasonably and in good faith at all times having regard to their responsibilities, the interests of RUW and the welfare of the students and colleagues'. The HR policies document is, however, silent on plagiarism in relation to staff. Academic misconduct on the part of staff is, however, mentioned in the Research Policy, which states that 'In case of misconduct in research, disciplinary action will be taken. Misconduct will not include honest error, honest differences in interpretation or judgment of data'. The Policy outlines procedures taken when possible academic misconduct is identified. The Panel did not encounter any instances of staff misconduct of an academic nature on its visit.

Registering a complaint involves completing an official complaint form and complaints are logged, as per the procedure for complaints. The SER describes clearly how the Institution deals with students' complaints. The SER also details opportunities for students to raise complaints in meetings with members of management including the President and Deans. In addition, student satisfaction surveys are used extensively.

RUW has a policy and procedure for dealing with appeals against grades. This requires appeals to be lodged in the Office of the Registrar (OR). The availability of an appeals' procedure was confirmed during the site visit. Nevertheless, during interviews, students and staff members indicated that appeals against grades were often raised outside the formal appeals' procedure and these were usually dealt with and resolved through discussion without a need to proceed to formal appeal procedures.

Overall, the Panel finds that RUW is a very well-regulated institution in the sense that clear structures and terms of reference for committees do exist. A number of standing committees

focus on academic matters and, as indicated above, these are required to set goals and report on the achievement of these goals annually, which addresses the requirements of this Indicator.

### Recommendation(s)

None

### Indicator 6: Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education (where applicable)

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

### Judgement: Addressed

RUW has a partnership with West Virginia University (WVU), USA for its qualification in Civil Engineering. This relationship is regulated by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2011 and renewed in 2016. The MoU states clearly that the degree of Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering is awarded by WVU. The agreement also states that the programme offered in Bahrain is equivalent to that offered in the USA. Endorsement of this was achieved from the US Higher Learning Commission and the Bahraini HEC in 2017. Site visit interviews with senior management confirmed that, should graduates of the Bahraini programme wish to practice in the United States, they would be eligible for accreditation as professionals, as their degrees had been awarded by WVU. In interviews, students also confirmed that they were aware that their degrees would be awarded by WVU and, indeed, that this was what had attracted them to enrol in the programme.

The management of the Civil Engineering programme is in the hands of the Dean of Engineering at WVU, and the faculty at WVU handle all academic matters. The Panel learned during the site visit that the Dean of Engineering at RUW acts as a coordinator within RUW for a programme located at WVU and does not carry academic responsibility for the programme. Staff interviewed in the course of the site visit were clear about their roles and responsibilities and were able to explain them to the Panel.

The MoU specifies the responsibilities of both WVU and RUW in respect of the agreement, including the oversight of the programme, staffing responsibilities and infrastructure requirements. As per the agreement between WVU and RUW, two faculty members attended training sessions in Morgantown that were organised by WVU to improve the academic capacity of the teaching staff. On its visit, the Panel confirmed that this training had taken place and that arrangements for further training were being discussed. The Panel was also informed of the way RUW understands its responsibilities with respect to the way quality assurance procedures are conducted in relation to the WVU programme.

Prospective students applying for the undergraduate qualification in Civil Engineering at RUW receive printed information about the nature of the programme and the arrangements made to offer it with WVU. In addition, the RUW website provides information about the arrangement for students studying in Bahrain to receive a qualification from WVU. The applications and admissions processes for the WVU programme offered in Bahrain follow those used for other programmes offered by RUW. However, once applications are received by the OR at RUW, they are immediately forwarded to the relevant office at WVU for consideration and all decisions regarding admissions are made by the faculty in West Virginia. According to the SER, students are informed about the policies and procedures related to the WVU programme during the induction programme. Some mandatory courses required by the HEC are taught by staff from RUW. Students confirmed this in interviews and noted that this was expected as the course content was tailored to Bahrain and the region.

Monitoring of the extent to which WVU meets all its obligations in respect of the programme is regulated by the various agreements between WVU and RUW. Regular visits of WVU staff to Bahrain take place and WVU has representatives on the BoT. The agreements signed by the two institutions also identify designated persons from both institutions responsible for various tasks. Furthermore, there is a 'Steering Committee' consisting of members of staff from both institutions to oversee the performance and reporting. A specific article for dispute resolution also exists. The agreement between WVU and RUW is therefore well-regulated and meets the requirements of this Indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

None

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

## Standard 2

### Quality Assurance and Enhancement

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

#### **Indicator 7: Quality Assurance**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

RUW has a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Unit (QAAU) that takes responsibility for ensuring adherence to quality standards, compliance with regulatory bodies, and the continuous enhancement of academic and administrative aspects. The 'Quality Management Systems' document clearly displays the scope of QAAU in overseeing quality processes and maintaining a quality culture at RUW. The QAAU is responsible for carrying out audits, administering and analysing surveys; and the progress of colleges and departments is monitored through the use of the balanced scorecard system. The performance of QAAU is measured, like other units and departments, through the KPIs identified in the operational plans and reports are forwarded to senior management for appraisal and approval. The lines of accountability are clearly described in the SER and stretch across the Institution, which is headed by the President who has the oversight of QAAU. In addition to the internal audits, which are carried out by the QAAU, an independent firm conducts an external audit for the institution to ensure that all departments implement the ISO9001:2015 standard properly.

RUW has clear policies and procedures, which are accessible in the Document Management System (DMS). These policies and procedures address the three core functions of the Institution and provide quality assurance processes to cover all administrative and academic operations at RUW. Moreover, the QAAU maintains a Document Control Register (DCR) that includes RUW policies, procedures, templates, guidelines, mandates, and handbooks. The DCR is regularly updated and the concerned committees review all policies according to a policy on Policy Writing. Each committee has representations from all colleges. During its visit, the Panel noticed that the members of committees have a clear understanding of their role and involvement in reviewing the policies and procedures. The Graduate Studies and Research Committee (GS&R), for example, owns all related research policies, procedures, and templates and oversees all matters relevant to research. This Committee has recently reviewed the RUW Research Policy using the feedback collected from staff surveys.

RUW has a 'Compliance Monitoring Policy' and each college and department has an 'HEC Compliance Checklist'. The QAAU is responsible for ensuring compliance with HEC

regulations, and carries out compliance checks at least once a semester in both academic and administrative departments. During the site visit, the Panel learned that all stakeholders are aware of HEC regulations in their specific areas of responsibilities. With regard to buildings, the evidence provided indicates that RUW is in full compliance with the HEC, as the Facilities and Services Department follows the HEC's 'Buildings and Annexes of Higher Education Institutions Regulations'. There is also a 'Campus Infrastructure Register', which lists campus facilities and furniture to ensure compliance with the HEC's 'Infrastructure Checklist'.

RUW's policies and procedures including job descriptions, forms and minutes of meetings ensure that academic and administrative staff understand their roles and how they relate to quality assurance. Job descriptions provide guidance for Deans, Heads of Departments (HoDs) and Directors, as well as administrative staff, in their roles in the quality assurance system of the Institution. During the site visit, the Panel noted that stakeholders, especially at senior levels, have a good understanding of their expected roles and were able to support the implementation of the quality assurance and enhancement policies. HoDs are represented in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QA&E), which provides them with an opportunity to be part of the forum that deals with maintaining the quality standards in the colleges. The reports of QA&E are presented in the Senate, which provides another forum for sharing information. Overall, the Panel appreciates that staff are aware of the quality systems and procedures that govern the operations at RUW and are kept informed of quality requirements through regular meetings. Hence, the Panel agrees that the Institution addresses the requirement of this Indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

None

#### **Indicator 8: Benchmarking and Surveys**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

The SER states that RUW uses benchmarking as a tool to evaluate academic and non-academic processes, identify good practices, inform planning and support improvement. The Benchmarking process is guided by the 'Benchmarking Policy', which encompasses formal and informal benchmarking activities. There is evidence that RUW is committed to benchmark against appropriate universities. The library services, for example, were benchmarked against five national, regional and international universities. In 2017, RUW signed an MoU for formal benchmarking with Dar Al Hekma University, Saudi Arabia that was endorsed by the HEC. Moreover, academic standards are evaluated against the standards of the partner institutions through formal programme reviews that have been conducted by WVU and La Rochelle Business School, France. The assessment of the Foundation Diploma Programme, incorporated

into Art and Design programmes, and the Orientation Programme are verified by Pearson and checked against Pearson quality standards.

The outcomes of formal and informal benchmarking are addressed in the improvement plans of the different departments and units. The benchmarking of the library services, for example, led to a report that identified areas for improvement and referred to the need to inform faculty and staff of resources and databases available in the library. The support services' improvement plan also includes items derived from the benchmarking activities to enhance services provided to students. Nevertheless, based on stakeholders' responses during interviews, the Panel concluded that RUW faces some challenges in benchmarking with local and regional institutions. The Panel learned that this was possibly because other institutions were reluctant to share their practices in a highly competitive environment. The Panel also learned that RUW had identified benchmarking as an area for improvement. RUW is urged to ensure that the need for improvement in this area is addressed, as benchmarking has the potential to contribute to quality in significant ways.

Surveys are employed extensively by RUW to gather feedback from its main stakeholders such as students, staff, graduates, alumnae and employers. The purpose of conducting surveys is stated as being to systematically improve effectiveness within the institution. Surveys conducted encompass course evaluations and teacher evaluations and include undergraduate exit surveys, alumnae surveys, employer surveys and student satisfaction surveys. Student satisfaction surveys include questions about the departments with which students have interacted. During its visit, the Panel confirmed that feedback was collected from stakeholders and that they were aware of the outcomes of the surveys. Based on the analysis of the data collected through the surveys, RUW develops improvement plans, which are approved by relevant forums. Results of student satisfaction surveys, for example, are discussed in the SMC and published by the Office of Student Affairs. During the site visit, the Panel saw the response of RUW to students' feedback displayed on digital signage at the reception areas and students confirmed that they were aware of the University's response to their feedback. The Panel appreciates that students are kept updated on the outcomes of their suggestions and that action taken is communicated to them electronically. Overall, the Panel concludes that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Ensure that the identified need for improvement in benchmarking is addressed to further contribute to quality in more significant ways.

#### ***Indicator 9: Security of Learner Records and Certification***

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

**Judgement:** Addressed

RUW has a PowerCampus, which is a Student Information System (SIS) that is used by both faculty and students to track attendance and the academic performance of students. Course materials, lecture notes, assignments and announcements are uploaded by faculty members on the SIS Self-Service. Students can either register online or in person and use the SIS to verify their timetables, course prerequisites and study plans. Online grading was introduced in the academic year 2015-2016 for all courses. The accuracy of results is ensured by the 'Policy for Grade Approval', which provides detailed steps for the verification and approval of grades. As per this policy, instructors enter the grades into the Self-Service system, which are verified by the HoDs and the signed copy of grades' sheet is forwarded by the Dean to the Registrar for final approval and publication. The Registrar sends the verified grades again to each instructor to reconfirm the accuracy of the published grades.

Students' assessment records are maintained according to the RUW 'Retention of Student Assessment Records Policy'. While records are kept in the archive room, documents and certificates are kept in fire-proof safes. Only staff from the OR are authorised to access these documents. All students' files with original documents are kept in fire-proof safes. The 'Disaster Recovery Policy' governs the security of student records together with digital back-up copies of student academic records. RUW ensures the integrity and security of students' records through limiting access to the archive room to staff of the OR only. The Panel learned during the site visit that the Registrar is in charge of the PowerCampus system and that RUW has a disaster recovery plan in place to deal with cases of possible system failure.

RUW has a 'Procedure for Graduation', according to which lists of students expected to graduate are sent to the colleges concerned, which in turn send the signed graduate audit forms to the OR. Another audit takes place after the approval and release of grades, to ensure that all pending courses have been successfully completed and that students have achieved a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 2.0. Following the verification and the approval of the list of graduates by the College Council and the Senate, the academic status of students is changed from 'enrolled' to 'graduate'. The OR issues certificates and transcripts only after ensuring that the graduation forms of the students reflect the same records in the system. Wall certificates show the student's full name, his/her university ID, the full title of the awarded qualification, the graduation date and a unique reference number. The transcript includes student details, the title of the programme, the list of completed courses, credits earned, grades, CGPA and a unique number. The QAAU audits the procedure for graduation to ensure compliance. This audit takes into consideration all students' details and documents and the HEC graduate confirmation request form. The Panel learned during the site visit that the QAAU audits the process of certification and graduation to ensure effectiveness of the process. The Panel was also informed that RUW has regular reviews to ensure the effectiveness of the mechanisms and procedures used to maintain the safety and integrity of students' records. The Panel also visited the room where students' records are kept. Overall, the Panel is of the view that RUW implements an effective academic record system and addresses the requirements of this Indicator.

**Recommendation(s)**

None

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

## Standard 3

### Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

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

#### **Indicator 10: Learning Resources**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

The Institution provides access to sufficient learning resources, including the library resources and its services, which are available for its stakeholders, including students and staff. The premises of the library contain four study areas, including a multi-media room for audio-visual study. The regulations of the Library are documented in the 'Library Policies' and the 'Library Operation Management Procedures', which are accessible through the internal DMS. While these documents describe the parameters for eligibility for the use of the facility and the measures to be taken to effectively manage the operations of the library, evaluation processes are not prescribed. For instance, there is no requirement that would ensure regular analysis of searches performed by library users (e.g., most-common search terms, most frequently accessed books, and searches for books that are not available). Accordingly, the Panel is of the view that the library evaluation processes should be clearly prescribed in relevant documents.

RUW provides new students and staff joining the Institution with an orientation programme where they are introduced to the facility and its services. This orientation includes workshops on usage of online services. Once registered with the library, students have access to hard copy and soft copy publications. While most books can be taken on loan, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and journals have to remain in the library. There are also mechanisms in place for academics to request additional resources in the library. This has resulted in additional electronic databases to which the University subscribed in recent years. Nevertheless, when it comes to the adequacy of library resources, the Panel noted that the staff satisfaction survey indicates that some staff consider the physical and electronic resources to be inadequate, and the Student Satisfaction survey indicates as well some lack of resources. Furthermore, the Panel noted from the graduate exit survey results for the Master of Design Management graduates that students' dissatisfaction with the library services and resources is relatively high (50% and 75%). The lack of physical resources in the library was also confirmed by students during the site visit. This is a clear indication that RUW would benefit from more physical resources in the library.

Faculty members are required to include in the course specifications which books, journals and data bases needed to be used to support learning in the courses for which they are responsible. The SER mentions that colleges are encouraged to recommend the latest edition of textbooks.

However, the Panel learned from students during the site visit that many students tend to rely on lecture slides and handouts rather than take the initiative to look for resources in the library. By handing out all course notes, instructors do not encourage students to go to the library and find information for themselves. Students need to be exposed to world of knowledge beyond that of textbooks and handouts provided to them by their instructors. This is particularly important as RUW moves to introduce more post-graduate programmes. In addition, based on feedback from stakeholders during the site visit, a review of the adequacy of the opening hours of the library also needs to take place. If justified, adjustments need to be made to accommodate residential students as well as post-graduate students.

RUW benchmarked its library services based on the LibQual + (ARL) survey, during the academic year 2016-2017, against libraries at five other universities (two local, one regional and two international). The benchmarking exercise was very thorough and detailed, and covered four areas including effect of services, information control, library as place, and frequency of use of resources. An improvement plan was prepared following the identification of the gaps as a result of this benchmarking. However, as noted by the Panel, not all actions in this plan have a deadline or are specific enough to determine if they will improve the library or not (e.g., conducting further surveys).

Although the processes for evaluation of the library and the learning resources provided are not stated in relevant policies and procedures, in practice the quality of these services are evaluated through the staff satisfaction survey and the student satisfaction survey. The results of these surveys are used to make recommendations to relevant units throughout the University for discussion and action. The library prepares an improvement plan based on the identified gaps and forwards it to QAAU and the Office of Student Affairs. According to the SER, results of the staff satisfaction survey are forwarded to the SMC. However, it is unclear how decisions and prioritization on action plans are made. Nevertheless, the provided evidence shows that the previous concern of the lack of a library manager was addressed and during interviews students indicated that there was an increase in the library holdings based on their feedback. Thus, the Panel concludes that the institution addresses this indicator.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- Ensure that the library evaluation processes are clearly prescribed in the relevant policies and procedures.
- Develop and implement a strategic approach to continue to build library resources particularly with regard to references other than textbooks.
- Review the adequacy of the opening hours of the library and adjust it accordingly.

### ***Indicator 11: ICT***

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

**Judgement:** Addressed

The ICT Unit reports to the Director of Administration. The responsibilities of the Unit are identified through the provision of job descriptions for the manager and technicians. The SER states that the role of ICT is explained to students and staff in their respective inductions. The services offered by ICT are listed on the website, however, the information is too brief to be of any help. Nevertheless, during interviews, the Panel learned that the roles and responsibilities of ICT are clear enough to the various stakeholders across campus. Although the SER does not mention an ICT Operational Plan, there is an 'ICT Disaster Recovery Policy' and a 'Back-Up Policy' that is implemented. The Panel learned in interviews that a backup operational centre is set up in a second room in order to allow ongoing ICT operations in case the primary ICT operations break down.

Planned maintenance is addressed through an Annual Maintenance Plan and resourcing is part of the planned maintenance process. The SER notes, for example, that the central uninterruptible power system was replaced due to ageing. However, there is no mention, for example, of plans for staged replacement or regular replacement cycles of ICT resources. Replacement appears to be *ad-hoc* and needs-based rather than systematic. Nevertheless, students and staff appear to be content with the status of IT equipment. Checking of maintenance is the responsibility of the ICT Manager. Maintenance agreements exist for various software and hardware components. Given that the majority of ICT services are outsourced, a detailed plan for staged replacement or regular replacement cycles of ICT resources would be useful.

The provided evidence shows the list of ICT equipment available at RUW. Based on interviews with stakeholders, the Panel concludes that a sufficient number of hardware and software licenses are available. Resourcing takes place through the submission of unit requests each year. The SER states that 'ICT required resources such as software, hardware, laptops, printers and photocopiers are accounted for at the time of planning and budgeting for the coming academic year'. Feedback on ICT services is collected through surveys, such as the student satisfaction survey and the staff satisfaction survey conducted each semester. Questions and answers sessions are another channel for collecting feedback from students about ICT services. Data collected about satisfaction levels is discussed in relevant committees and students are electronically informed of actions taken on the basis of its analysis.

RUW's administrative and support services staff use an Enterprise Resources Planning system while colleges and students use PowerCampus software such as the SIS. These software tools facilitate the monitoring of activities related to both administrative and academic operation of the Institution. However, the Panel was unable to identify references to any specific reports generated on a regular basis for management and academic staff to assist them in planning and enhancing ICT services. Nonetheless, there are evidence on their functionality and usage in registration, communication, recording attendance, grading, and academic performance monitoring, which was collaborated during interviews with senior managers, academic staff and students. The Panel also notes students and staff satisfaction with the ICT services and concludes that this indicator is addressed.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- Develop a detailed plan for staged replacement or regular replacement cycles of ICT resources.
- Develop a portfolio of regular reports for management and academic staff to further improve ICT services.

### **Indicator 12: Infrastructure**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

RUW has a 'Campus Infrastructure Register' and an 'Asset Register', describing classrooms available and their capacity, laboratories, academic offices, and the library which is in compliance with HEC requirements. Internal and outsourced maintenance tasks are carried out regularly. An 'Asset Management System' is used to assign and manage barcodes of each movable asset purchased by the Institution. While there is a schedule for maintenance, the Panel is of the view that the Institution should develop a regular and systematic replacement / upgrade plan of the infrastructure and equipment.

According to the SER, the total number of currently enrolled students is 672 and the amenities available include clinic, student centre, cafeteria, sport centre, indoor swimming pool, open air stadium as well as two residence buildings. The campus has an overall capacity of up to 3000 students. RUW has a 'Health and Safety Policy', 'Campus Health and Safety Handbook', first aid boxes and fire extinguishers located throughout the campus. The premises of RUW are compliant with the requirements of the Civil Defence Authority of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which is checked on a semester-basis.

Data regarding student satisfaction with RUW infrastructure is collected through surveys conducted at the end of each semester. The outcome of these surveys is discussed at SMC meetings. Suggestion boxes are another tool to collect data about gaps and suggestions to improve the Institution, which are dealt with by the Office of Student Affairs and channelled to the relevant unit. During interviews with students, the Panel noted that students are generally satisfied with the variety and quality of RUW's infrastructure. Overall, the Panel appreciates that RUW offers an excellent setup in terms of the physical infrastructure and agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Develop a regular and systematic replacement / upgrade plan of the infrastructure and equipment.

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

## Standard 4

### The Quality of Teaching and Learning

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

#### **Indicator 13: Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has a five-year 'Academic Roadmap 2016-2021', which serves as a link between the institution-wide strategic plan and operational plans. The document includes a statement of the philosophy of teaching and learning, which is appropriate for the qualifications offered by the Institution and its mission. The document also incorporates five broad strategic goals, which are listed in the institution's strategic plan and provides a planning framework/timeline through which the specified teaching and learning objectives can be achieved. However, the Panel is of the view that the Institution would benefit from a more detailed academic roadmap to facilitate the planning and the monitoring processes. As per the SER, the academic standards and planning are overseen and monitored by the RUW Senate and the Academic Vice President (AVP).

Faculty as well as HoDs, Deans and the AVP have job descriptions that outline their responsibilities for both the planning and the execution levels of the hierarchy in the management of the academic programmes. During the site visit and interviews with both academic and administrative staff, it was noted that job descriptions were given to all employees of the Institution upon joining and relevant HoDs discuss them with the new faculty members. The Panel concluded that there was sufficient awareness among RUW's faculty members of their duties and responsibilities, as specified in their job descriptions.

The Teaching and Learning Committee which is comprised of representatives from all colleges and the registrar, is responsible for advising the Deans' Council on processes and procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning, academic standards and assessment. The Committee is also responsible for a number of activities related to the direct academic operation of the Institution, such as: ensuring the consistency of programmes, the appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and their alignments with the assessment tools utilized by programmes and verifying the mapping of courses to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level descriptors. Interviews with RUW academics and members of the Teaching and Learning Committee during the site visit indicated that all academic matters are handled by the Teaching and Learning Committee including the quality assurance checks on assessment, learning, and teaching.

RUW has a Teaching and Learning Policy in place which was approved in 2016 and provides a framework for teaching and learning. It is reviewed every three years and amended as necessary. Implementation and monitoring of the Policy is guided by the academic quality framework to ensure enhancement of the learning experience, relevance, currency and quality of programmes, improvement of skills and capacity of staff and increasing the stakeholders' satisfaction. The Institution delegates the responsibility for monitoring and maintaining academic standards with regards to programmes offered to the Teaching and Learning Committee. The QA&E Committee is also responsible for these same areas. The Panel is of the opinion that an overlap exists between the responsibilities of the two committees in respect of these areas. This is a matter of potential concern given the number of committee meetings that take place and the fact that staff are usually members of more than one committee. While this is currently workable given the small size of the University, as RUW grows, however, it might be worth rethinking this arrangement.

RUW has an internship course on the list of courses offered in all undergraduate qualifications and an internship coordinator is assigned in each college to supervise the placement of students, liaise with the industry and maintain students' records. The Institution has an 'Internship Policy and Procedure', which outlines the responsibilities of parties involved as well as the process itself. Students are eligible to take the internship course (200 working hours) after the completion of a minimum of 60 credit hours of their academic programme and can either seek placement in a host organization independently or with the assistance of the Institution. An initial meeting is arranged between the students and the internship instructor to introduce them to the course and what is expected of them as well as to the final report required at the end of their experience in the workplace. Internships are monitored by the assigned supervisor and data is collected from all stakeholders involved through surveys such as the 'Employer Feedback Discussion Form', the 'Internship Evaluation Form' as well as the final report presented by the internee. During interviews with internship supervisors from the industry, the Panel noted that there were cases where the supervision of the trainees was conducted by means of a telephone call or email with no representative from the Institution visiting the training site. The Panel is of the view that the Institution should ensure that the training sites are regularly visited and that the internship experience is monitored formally. The Panel also acknowledges that the arrangements for the internship course of the institution in terms of duration, intended learning outcomes achievement, and written assessment are, in general, satisfactory and fulfil the requirements of the programmes.

Regular programme reviews enable RUW to evaluate its teaching and learning approaches. Reviews involve internal and external stakeholders. A Curriculum Review Framework was developed in 2015-2016 to obtain feedback from all stakeholders including external examiners, external verifiers, advisory committees, subject experts, faculty, course evaluations, etc. Feedback from these surveys is incorporated in the improvement plans of departments, colleges and administrative units. Classroom teaching observations are also used to evaluate the teaching of faculty members and are conducted twice a year by the HoD, Dean, and peers. Feedback from these observations is discussed with the instructor for improvement purposes. Faculty interviewed during the site visit confirmed the benefits attained from such observations and that

feedback contributes to the enhancement of course delivery and achievement of learning outcomes. Overall the Panel is of the view that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Develop a more detailed academic roadmap to facilitate the planning and the monitoring processes.
- Ensure that the training sites are regularly visited and that the internship experience is monitored formally.

#### **Indicator 14: Admissions**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW provides stakeholders with information about academic programmes, admission criteria, credit transfer, attendance requirements, and the academic integrity code through a number of platforms such as the 'Student Handbook', the website, and the 'Academic Brochure'. Information regarding the transfer of credits is clearly stated in the 'Access, Transfer and Progression Policy', which is aligned with the HEC regulations. This information is also available in the 'Student Handbook' and on the institution's website. The Panel noted some discrepancies in the information available on the website, the SER and other documents regarding the institution's colleges and units and, hence, the Panel advises the Institution to update the information on the different platforms.

RUW has an Access, Transfer and Progression Policy. Information about credit transfer is detailed in the Student Handbook and on the website in the case of students wanting to transfer from another institution recognized by the HEC. A Change of Major Policy guides transfer across programmes within RUW. Transfer students are required to complete the relevant transfer forms which are available at the OR. A maximum of 66% of the total credits can be granted for courses passed with grade C and above.

The admission criteria for RUW follow the regulations of the HEC. They include a secondary school certificate, and evidence of a minimum level of English language proficiency. Admission to different programmes requires proficiencies in certain knowledge fields. For example, the College of Business and Financial Science and the College of Engineering require mathematics proficiency (minimum score of 60% in Grade 12 mathematics). Applicants who did not achieve the minimum score are required to take a compulsory course in mathematics at RUW. Applicants are also required to present a TOEFL or IELTS certificate with specific band scores to be eligible for admission to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at RUW. Applicants without the afore-mentioned certificates are requested to take the online English placement test and score a minimum of 5.5 for the undergraduate programmes and 6.0 for the postgraduate programmes. Those who do not meet the minimum score requirement for the undergraduate programmes are

admitted into the 'English Orientation Programme', which consists of two levels (1 and 2) based on their achievement in the online English test; while, postgraduate applicants are required to take a foundation English course at RUW, if they do not achieve the minimum score.

The 'English Orientation Programme' is accredited by Pearson, UK and students are awarded a Diploma in 'English for Academic Success' from Pearson upon completion. An analysis of the programme outcome is provided by the Institution. The analysis indicates that, of a total of 171 students who joined the programme, 91.8% passed and only 8.2% failed. Out of those 8.2% only 50% (7 students) decided not to re-join the programme. Interviews revealed that students who fail the programme can repeat it as many times as applicable. Upon the successful completion of the College of Art and Design's foundation programme, students are awarded the Business & Technology Education Council's (BTEC) Level 3 Diploma in Art and Design.

The admission policy is reviewed as a result of changes in the requirements of the HEC or as a result of the internal and external reviews of the programmes. As stated in the SER and confirmed during the site visit, RUW ensures that the admission criteria are suitable for the needs of each programme through informal benchmarking, statistics on students' performance and feedback received from the colleges. Overall the Panel acknowledges that the admission requirements are in line with HEC requirements and that there is an appropriate English Foundation programme for undergraduate students. Thus, the Panel concludes that this indicator is addressed.

### Recommendation(s)

None

### **Indicator 15: Introduction and Review of Programmes**

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

### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has a 'Periodic Programme Review Policy' in place, which mandates that external and internal periodic reviews of all programmes be carried out at least once every four years. The Policy was approved by the University Senate in December 2017 and is up for review every three years. During programme reviews, feedback is sought from internal stakeholders such as students, and faculty, as well as external stakeholders such as alumnae, examiners and verifiers, training supervisors, employers, advisory committees, parents and experts in the field. Feedback from the industry and experts in the field provides insight about the currency of the curriculum, its relevance to the labour market and employability. The most recent programme review was conducted in the academic year 2016-2017 and resulted in changes incorporated in the new

curriculum based on feedback received. A number of qualifications (Interior Design, Graphic Design and Fashion Design programmes of the College of Art and Design) offered at RUW have been reviewed by an external body, namely WVU in 2012-2013. The College of Law also collaborated with the University of Cambridge for its programme review.

Some of the programmes offered by RUW are modelled on those offered by international higher education institutions such as WVU, which offers its Bachelor of Science qualification in Civil Engineering on the RUW campus, and La Rochelle Business School, France, for programmes offered in the College of Business and Financial Sciences. The 'English Orientation Programme' and the College of Art and Design's foundation programme are accredited by Pearson, UK.

Mapping takes place against the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) as required by the 'Programme Approval and Modification Policy'. RUW mapped two programmes (the English Orientation Programme and the BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Art and Design) and both programmes were successfully aligned to the NQF. More programmes are currently in the process of being mapped and placed on the NQF. However, the NQF level and credits are still not stated on the issued certificates. The Panel advises the Institution to expedite this process.

The 'Programme Approval and Modification Policy' was developed in 2017 and is up for review every three years. This policy provides a mechanism for the introduction, approval and alignment of proposed programmes with the requirements of both HEC and NQF. It also takes into account the provision of necessary resources such as faculty, infrastructure and learning materials. The procedure starts with the drafting of a proposal by Faculty Committee and once the pre-approval of the EXCO is secured, a formal identification of need is conducted and the documents required by the HEC are prepared and internally approved at every level of the Institution before seeking the HEC approval. As per the 'Programme Approval and Modification Policy', the responsibility of ensuring that Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) clearly reflect the appropriate NQF level is assigned to the Senate and its relevant subcommittees [SM409]. With regard to the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs, the Panel is of the view that the aforementioned policy should clearly identify parties involved in the preparation and the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs and assign responsibilities for such tasks accordingly, for accountability purposes.

As per the NQF requirements, RUW assigns the responsibility for mapping the PILOs and the CILOs to the NQF level descriptors to the College Council and confirmation of the mapping to the Senate. The mapping panel reviews relevant paperwork related to mapping, such as the scorecards in accordance with NQF requirements, and ensures compliance, revises and approves course specifications which are mapped against the appropriate NQF level. The confirmation panel confirms proposed NQF levels and credit allocation after being approved by the Deans' Council and the Teaching and Learning Committee, respectively. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

## **Recommendation(s)**

- Revise the ‘Programme Approval and Modification Policy’ to clearly identify parties involved in the preparation and the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs and assign responsibilities for such tasks.

### **Indicator 16: Student Assessment and Moderation**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has an ‘Assessment Policy’, which provides guidelines on assessment regulations for all colleges and which was introduced in 2017. It covers both formative and summative assessment for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes offered by the Institution and it is up for review every three years. Instructors are required to specify the assessment tools employed for their courses and revise the assessment in the course specification. The Student Handbook includes those parts of the ‘Assessment Policy’ related to students and describes their responsibilities toward the assessment of courses. Course specification forms distributed to students at the beginning of each semester include: assessment tools, percentages allocated to those tools, the CILOs tested by each tool and the mapping of the assessment to the CILOs. The Panel noted that the course specification forms indicate that the Institution utilizes a variety of assessment tools to measure students’ achievement of learning outcomes. These tools include quizzes, written examinations, case studies, reports, presentations with the dominant assessment tool being written examinations and quizzes in most courses offered at RUW.

RUW has a ‘Professional Development Policy for Academic Staff’ which was approved in 2017 and is due for review every three years. The Institution provides faculty with internal training and workshops related to assessment design and the writing of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). During interviews with faculty and senior management, the Panel was informed that academic staff development opportunities were identified through evaluation and appraisal. Upon examination of supporting material provided by the Institution, the Panel noted with appreciation the initiative taken by RUW to develop faculty in innovative classroom approaches to teaching and learning in collaboration with Bangor University in May 2018. The Panel also noted the limited staff development opportunities related to the measurement of course and programme ILOs through appropriate design of assessment and the use of varying assessment tools that are offered by external entities. The Panel is of the view that RUW should consider exposing staff to more external professional development opportunities to support them in accomplishing their tasks and to encourage the adoption of new and creative assessment tools.

The ‘Assessment Policy’ covers internal and external moderation of assessment procedures at RUW. Internal pre-assessment moderation of examinations and assessment methods cover both single courses and multi-section courses, while the internal post-assessment moderation of assessed coursework and examinations includes second marking, course file audits, co-examination and programme reviews. As for external moderation, the ‘Assessment Policy’ and

the External Examination and External Verification Policy describe the selection and appointment procedures of external verifiers, examiners and reviewers, which is in alignment with the HEC guidelines, as well as their roles and responsibilities to ensure that the academic standards of the Institution are maintained. They also have the responsibility of ensuring that assessments are designed appropriately to measure students' achievements and are aligned with the ILOs.

The students are made aware of their right to appeal against their grades in the 'Student Handbook'. The process is handled by the OR and is initiated by the student herself electronically within the specified time period set on the academic calendar for entertaining such requests. From the site visit and interviews with students, the Panel noted with appreciation that students are happy with the open lines of communication with faculty and the management of the Institution and that their grievances are handled with care and promptness. Interviews also revealed that, on a few occasions, adjustments to marks assigned to parts of examinations were made or students were given assignments to compensate for their low performance on these assessments in response to grievances made by students. The Panel is concerned that interviews with senior management, staff and students, examination of extra evidences, and site visit evidences showed a misalignment in the consistent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of grievance cases within the Institution and, thus, urges RUW to ensure that all grievance cases are handled as per the institution's published policy and procedures. The Panel is also of the view that the Institution should reconsider the methods used to accommodate student grievances in some cases.

RUW has a 'Plagiarism Policy' in place and a 'Plagiarism Awareness Handbook', which is distributed to students during the orientation period. The 'Student Handbook' also contains sections dedicated to the 'Academic Integrity Code', the 'Disciplinary Policy' and the 'Students Code of Conduct'. The Disciplinary Committee's mandate describes the composition of the Committee, roles and responsibilities. Evidence submitted by the Institution presents one case of research plagiarism, and one case of cheating during an examination. The Institution requires that essay type assessments be submitted *via* Turnitin. The Panel appreciates RUW's efforts to familiarize students with the concept of plagiarism and the various forms it takes. It finds that the dissemination of information related to plagiarism and academic misconduct is well-covered and handled by the Institution. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- Consider exposing staff to more external professional development opportunities to support them in accomplishing their tasks and to encourage the adoption of new and creative assessment tools.
- Ensure that all grievance cases are handled as per the institution's published policy and procedures, and reconsider the methods used to accommodate student grievances in some cases.

### **Indicator 17: The Learning Outcomes**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

The 'Teaching and Learning Policy' states that all programmes at RUW must have clear PILOs, which are aligned with the University's mission, while specific courses must have CILOs that contribute to the achievement of the PILOs. Programme specifications' forms include the PILOs of the programme covering the four domains of knowledge and learning, subject specific skills, critical thinking and general and transferrable skills. These forms also include the teaching and learning methods and assessment tools. The programme specification goes through several approval levels before being finalized. The process starts with discussions of PILOs in College Council meetings and then the PILOs incorporated in the programme specifications are forwarded to the Teaching and Learning Committee for review and approval and later to the University Senate for approval. Course specifications are developed by instructors and the Teaching and Learning Committee evaluates the CILOs' accuracy and effectiveness and the assessment methods used to measure students' learning.

Graduate attributes representing academic abilities, personal qualities and skills are reflected in the plans and strategies of the Institution, such as the 'Plan for Improving Employability', which links graduate attributes to transferrable skills and the 'Student Experience Strategy' that outlines activities intended to support the development of these attributes. The students are informed about the expected graduate attributes in the 'Student Handbook'. The attributes reflect the vision statement and, along with the ILOs, place emphasis on student-centred learning, life-long learning and list the generic skills and knowledge that RUW graduates should possess.

The achievement of attributes and learning outcomes are measured directly through assessment. The Institution measures the achievement of CILOs, which are linked to the PILOs and graduate attributes. At the end of each academic year PILO/CILO matrices are completed and analysed to evaluate their achievement for every programme offered at the Institution. The HoDs and Deans review the matrices and the results are discussed at the departments' level for improvement purposes. Following a thorough examination of support materials provided by the Institution as well as interviews held during the site visit, the Panel was unable to define a clear and definite measure of achievement of CILOs against the PILOs and its inclusion in the benchmarking exercises carried so far. The Panel is of the view that there is a need to establish a mechanism to provide reliable information about the achievement of learning outcomes from a comparative perspective that includes national and international levels in order to enable stakeholders to make more informed decisions to improve learning quality.

RUW provides the opportunity for learners to exit a programme at a given level and progress to another programme. As mentioned earlier in this Report, students who wish to change their

major from one programme to another within the Institution complete an 'Undergraduate Programme Transfer Form' after consultation with their academic advisor, the HoD and the Dean. Students in Graphic Design, Fashion Design and Interior Design programmes are awarded the BTEC Level 3 Diploma in Art and Design from the UK upon the successful completion of the foundation year and before proceeding to year 2 in the programme. RUW also has an effective system in place to ensure the safety of certificates' issuance process. The 'Procedure for Graduation' document describes the graduation process of students as well as the assigned responsibilities. The process is initiated with the OR and the list of students that are expected to graduate together with their recent transcripts are sent to colleges for internal audit and approval, to ensure the fulfilment of the graduation requirements including the minimum CGPA. Approval of the HEC as a governing body is also secured for the list of graduates before the issuance of wall certificates.

The Institution tracks student progression through the academic advising process, which is clearly described in the 'Academic Advising Policy' and the Student Handbook. The advisor and the student communicate regularly, either in person or electronically, with focusing mainly on the selection of courses, academic performance, early intervention in case of at-risk students, attendance and other academic issues. The advisor retains files for each advisee including advisor forms, study plan and transcripts. Furthermore, the Institution maintains records of student progression through programme data sets for each programme, thereby tracking retention rates, progression rates and graduation rates. In addition, the 'Alumnae Affairs Policy' describes all activities and processes related to the tracking of RUW Alumnae and describes the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the communication and tracking process. The Office of Student Affairs is also responsible for tracking graduates of the Institution and has a tracker with their latest data. Although the Panel was able to affirm the development of the alumnae databases and the efforts taken by the Institution to track their progress, evidence is yet to be provided that information collected from alumnae contribute to the academic growth of RUW. The Panel is of the view that the programme should ensure that the information gathered in relation to student progression and graduate destinations is used to enhance the attainment of academic standards.

The equivalence of learning outcomes is determined and verified through Benchmarking and external reviews. As mentioned earlier in this Report, the 'Benchmarking Policy' describes the procedure for benchmarking activities and the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. All colleges at the Institution are required to identify universities against which they can benchmark. MoUs signed by RUW with regional and international universities such as WVU, Dar Al Hekma University and Bangor University enable external programme reviews, which help in identifying gaps and provide recommendations to ensure the academic standards. Furthermore, the college advisory committees act as local external reference points in order to evaluate the institution's programmes with the local market. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- Establish a mechanism to provide reliable information about the achievement of learning outcomes from a comparative perspective that includes national and international levels, in order to enable stakeholders to make more informed decisions to improve learning quality.
- Ensure that the information gathered in relation to student progression and graduate destinations is used to enhance the attainment of academic standards.

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

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

**Judgement:** Addressed

Recognition of prior learning is handled through credit transfer arrangements detailed in the 'Access, Transfer and Progression Policy' and the 'Student Handbook'. Hence, RUW recognizes only formal prior learning which results in the award of credit either internally or from another recognized institution by the HEC. Language proficiency is also recognized by RUW and students whose language proficiency meets admission requirements do not need to take the 'English Orientation Programme'. The Panel was unable to identify any policy or procedures to support recognition of competence drawn from any aspect of the applicant's professional or personal accomplishments, which is not currently restricted by the HEC. Hence, the Panel agrees that the Institution satisfies this Indicator.

**Recommendation(s)**

None

**Indicator 19: Short courses**

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

Not Applicable

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

## Standard 5

### Student Support Services

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

#### **Indicator 20: Student Support**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

The Institution has a range of student support services, which are provided by the Office of Student Affairs and are listed in the 'Academic Brochure', and the 'Student Handbook'. A 'Procedure for Student Affairs & Student Activities' document also exists and describes these services. Services include counselling, medical support, learning support, student lockers, lost and found facilities, housing and sports facilities. The Office of Student Affairs coordinates the RUW's Student Council, students' clubs, sports clubs, and maintains the Alumni database. The Career Guidance and Internship Unit (CGIU) falls under the jurisdiction of the Director of Student Affairs. The CGIU maintains databases related to internship, employers, training providers, MoUs with employers and alumni. It also provides career guidance and training opportunities for current students and alumni. The CGIU arranges a number of workshops throughout the year providing training for future job seekers, such as CV writing, interview techniques and skills identification as well as arranging career fairs. Career guidance is very extensive and a useful handbook on it is provided to students.

The Institution has a 'Special Needs Policy' in place, which covers the needs and different learning styles of students and provisions for learners with physical challenges. Special needs' cases are identified at the time of admission and forwarded to concerned colleges by the OR. Such cases are discussed in college councils and appropriate means of support are offered to them. In addition, the campus is designed with consideration for the needs of students with physical disabilities. In the case of special learning needs, the policy considers alternative assessment tasks, if required, to allow effective demonstration of competences against outcomes.

RUW has a 'Posting Policy' included in the 'Students Handbook', which describes and guides the dissemination of information regarding grades, activities, events, visits, important dates, reminders and other student-related issues. Most of the communication is done electronically *via* emails. The posting log records all communications forwarded to students electronically and is maintained by the Office of Student Affairs. Faculty also communicate with students *via* the SIS for all issues related to the programme of study, such as assignments. Moreover, students have online access, which allows them to view their course grades after having been officially published. Grade appeal results are also communicated electronically to the students *via* emails.

Booklets for students are comprehensive and clearly laid out (e.g. the 'Student Handbook' and the 'Academic Brochure').

The Office of Student Affairs at RUW is responsible for the preparation of the annual 'Student Activities Planner', which lists all events planned for the upcoming year and communicates these activities to students and colleges electronically and *via* postings on bulletin boards. The Student Council, student clubs and special events are also supervised by the Office of Student Affairs. Furthermore, the Institution encourages students to take part in extra-curricular activities by awarding actively participating students 'A credit'. The activities planned by Student Affairs are prepared in collaboration with College Deans to better select relevant, cost-effective events. The extensive list of extracurricular events is an important step towards achieving the Vision of RUW that 'the RUW graduate will be creative, confident and forward thinking'.

The 'Student Satisfaction Survey' contains questions to help evaluate the performance of student support services. During interviews, the Panel learned that students provide their feedback and comments regarding the support services offered *via* this survey as well as during questions and answers sessions, which are held each semester with Deans of colleges. Information collected from those two satisfaction measurement tools are analysed by Student Affairs and discussed in meetings of the SMC. Based on the outcomes of both the survey and the sessions, an action plan is prepared to improve the quality and enhance the processes. Students are informed of improvements made on the basis of their feedback using a 'You said, we did' format. However, feedback from students and alumni during interviews indicated that the opening hours of the library are potentially problematic. Food services on campus are also not always available when students require them. This impacts part-time and post-graduate students in particular.

Students at risk of academic failure are placed on academic probation, which is explained to students in the 'Student Handbook'. The OR identifies students whose CGPA falls below 2.00 and forwards a list of those students to the college Deans who notify advisors about these cases. At-risk students are advised to meet with their instructors and advisors to discuss their academic performance and to determine measures to be taken to improve. One of the features of the SIS enables the early detection of at-risk students through a 'projected grades' function in PowerCampus. This feature enables students, instructors, advisors, HoDs, Deans, and the AVP to monitor online students' progress in certain courses and to take necessary action. Attendance of students is also monitored online by the OR, as instructors' records of attendance are submitted through the electronic Self-Service system of the Institution. Warnings for failure to attend classes at pre-set levels (10%, 15%, and 25%) are issued by the OR.

The 'Academic Advising Policy' describes the procedure for the process of advising students and describes the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved. Students are made aware of this policy in the 'Student Handbook' and of their role to ensure proper registration in relevant courses. Advisors are assigned to students by their college and they stay with the student during their entire time at the Institution. They provide advisees with career guidance, updates and opportunities in the employment market and how to pursue these opportunities, in addition to providing them with academic performance enhancement techniques. The Office of Student

Affairs also provides career guidance, counselling, and other support services that shape an effective learning environment. The Panel noted that tutorial support for students is limited mainly to that offered by instructors of the courses in which the student is registered. The Panel is of the view that direct interaction with students promotes active learning and that tutorial support can be broadened to include the support provided by peers through student peer tutorials, which can be organized through the Office of Student Affairs. Overall, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Ensure that access to facilities, in particular the library and food services, meets the needs of post-graduate and part-time students.

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

## Standard 6

### Human Resources Management

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

#### **Indicator 21: Human Resources**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has a five-year HR strategy that covers 7 areas: recruitment and retention, performance and reward arrangements, organisational development, employee relations and engagement, workplace wellness, equality and diversity and operational excellence. The provided evidence shows that the HR strategy is further supported by an HR policy that details the process and execution of the strategy, in addition to detailed HR procedures for recruiting highly qualified academic and administrative staff. During interviews, the Panel learned that RUW also has a pool of part-time staff that are employed in line with HEC regulations. In terms of staff promotion, RUW has a procedure to guide this process for academic staff, which includes details on the criteria used in the promotion process. However, during the site visit, the Panel learned that the last academic promotion took place three years ago and that two applications are pending consideration. The Panel also observed that staff in senior positions have been acting for a considerable length of time without confirmation of their appointments. Hence, the Panel encourages RUW to resolve this matter as soon as possible.

RUW conducts performance appraisal annually for both academic and administrative staff as well as for new staff after completing the probation period (three months), as was confirmed to the Panel during interviews. From the provided evidence, the Panel noted that RUW uses detailed rubrics to guide the performance appraisal of academic and administrative staff. RUW also keeps up-to-date records of staff qualifications and experience. During the site visit, the Panel visited the HR Department, and noticed that staff records include their certifications, passport details, CPR, documents confirming experience, contracts, documents confirming completion of professional development activities and promotion documents. A checklist of staff files including those employed on a part-time basis is maintained, and there is an e-filing system that has been recently introduced to back up the filing process. The Panel learned during interviews that authenticated qualification documents are required to be provided by staff. The Panel was also informed that RUW ensures that staff are appropriate for its programme qualification mix.

There are implemented induction processes for all new staff, which include an 'Orientation Programme'. The programme is organised by the HR Department and consists of two days,

which include an overview of the RUW academic framework, colleges and programmes. The OR provides further induction and refresher sessions to new and existing staff on the use of the Self-Service system. New academic staff members are also introduced to the library by the library manager. By the end of the orientation programme, feedback from staff on their experience of the orientation process is collected, and the results are discussed in the Deans' Council meeting if needed. There is also an 'Orientation Handbook', which is available to all newly appointed academic staff as well as administrative staff. During the site visit both full and part-time academic staff confirmed that they received proper induction. The Panel also heard that staff who moved to higher positions are provided with mentoring to support them in meeting their new responsibilities, although this process is not formalised. The Panel advises the Institution to formalize this process.

There is an implemented workload allocation system for academic staff as per the 'Workload Policy', which aims to provide colleges and departments with a framework that helps in fairly and efficiently utilising the abilities of academic staff in teaching and research, and which follows HEC regulations for the allocation of teaching and project supervision loads. To further support research among academic staff, two uninterrupted hours per week are allocated for research. This was a recommendation from the Deans' Council and was approved by the Senate. The allocation of teaching load for a professor is three courses and five project supervisions. Nonetheless, academic staff confirmed during the interviews that they find it difficult to maintain a balance between research and teaching as well as the other administrative duties. They also confirmed that academic promotion is a challenge as it depends on research. The Panel concludes that this may hinder RUW from achieving its aspiration to become a 'Centre for Women's Studies', supporting research conducted in this area. The Panel is also of the view that the Institution should further support faculty to conduct research to maintain and update their academic knowledge and skills, in line with the mission and vision of the Institution.

There is a systematic and fair process for the investigation of complaints and grievances by staff, which is governed and guided by the 'Grievance Policy'. This policy includes settling complaints through formal and informal processes, in addition to mediating and resolving complaints and provision of fair judgement. The Policy is accessible to all staff through DMS and complaints are made using the 'Notice of Grievance Form', which is also accessible *via* DMS. Violation of RUW's regulations, which are noted in employee contracts, subject staff to the 'Breach Code of Conduct Policy'. Feedback from stakeholders during the site visit, revealed that they were not aware of any academic misconduct or grievance cases.

Staff satisfaction surveys are conducted every semester electronically to provide RUW with feedback about improvements. QAAU is responsible for the analysis of the surveys and the analysed results are presented to the SMC, which discusses these results and proposes improvements in areas of operations, staff development, facilities and services. The Panel received confirmation from stakeholders that staff satisfaction surveys are carried out every year. All exiting staff also complete an Employee Exit Form. Exit forms of faculty members are discussed in the Deans' Council; while, those for administrative staff in the SMC. Staff turnover is assessed by the HR Department through the 'Procedure for Employee Exit' and during

interviews, the Panel was informed that exit forms help the HR Department become aware of the causes for staff resignation, thus, providing insights that can be used to improve the work environment and staff retention. Overall, the Panel finds that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- Further support faculty to conduct research, in order to maintain and update their academic knowledge and skills in line with the mission and vision of the Institution.

### ***Indicator 22: Staff Development***

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

### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has a systematic and comprehensive approach to staff development that is guided by the 'Professional Development Policy for Academic Staff' and the 'Procedure for Academic Staff Professional Development'. Moreover, a 'Procedure for Training Management', a 'Training Plan' and a 'Training Needs Analysis' process, guide the identification of training needs for administrative staff. RUW also has an 'Annual Professional Development Plan', which is based on the annual appraisal of academic staff, in line with the 'Procedure for Academic Staff Appraisal' and the 'Procedure for the Performance Evaluation of Administrative Staff'.

Appraisal of academic staff includes feedback from students on teaching, collected on a semester basis, classroom teaching observations, academic staff appraisal forms completed by the HoD/Dean/AVP and self-appraisal by the academic staff members. As for the administrative staff, they complete a self-appraisal as well, and their line manager evaluates them based on the rubrics contained in the appraisal procedure. Based on the performance appraisal of both academic and administrative staff, decisions about annual increments, incentives and promotion are made. During the site visit interviews, feedback from both academic and administrative staff to the Panel reflected their awareness of, and satisfaction with, the performance management processes employed by the University. The Panel also learned that performance appraisal is conducted annually and that the Academic Staff Appraisal Working Group, which is chaired by the AVP and consists of all deans and academic directors, is responsible for the periodic review of academic staff appraisal.

Training for both academic and administrative staff is planned at university and college levels at the beginning of the academic year to ensure continuous development. This training caters to all staff, and is with a reasonable budget of 2% of the total revenue, following HEC regulations. Staff's participation in local, regional and international conferences is also encouraged and supported by RUW. This is in addition to attending training on the National Qualifications Framework, which is included in RUW 'Professional Development Policy for Academic Staff',

and is a part of the annual planning processes completed by Deans and approved by SMC. In preparation for the institutional listing on the National Qualifications Framework, a series of internal and external workshops were conducted, and following the listing of the Institution, RUW is planning to place its programmes also on the Framework.

The Panel was informed during interviews with staff that staff development is an important aspect of their employment at RUW. The Panel also learned that staff can apply for financial support for Professional Development (PD) using an application form and that RUW encourages and supports its staff participation in local, regional and international conferences. Furthermore, administrative staff are provided with opportunities by RUW to complete their education by, for example, pursuing Bachelor and Master's degrees. The Panel also noticed that all staff are aware of the opportunities provided for Professional Development and they are encouraged to avail themselves for such opportunities. Thus, the Panel appreciates staff satisfaction with the PD opportunities offered by RUW. Nonetheless, during the site visit interviews, senior management identified research as an area for improvement and the Panel is of the view that there is a need to strengthen efforts to develop the institution's research culture and research capacity, which would then lead to an increase in research output. The Panel is also of the view that RUW should consider exposing staff to more external PD opportunities to assist them in accomplishing their tasks as detailed in Indicator 16.

RUW monitors its PD activities through the feedback forms that are filled by staff after each training. The feedback provided by staff is discussed in college councils and the Deans' Council in order to inform future planning. During site visit interviews, senior management and staff confirmed that there are measures in place to review feedback from staff development programmes. The provided feedback analysis shows the areas identified by academic staff for PD, and further evidence was provided to the Panel on the actions taken to address PD needs as identified in the feedback analysis document. Furthermore, line managers also fill a 'Post Training Evaluation Form' in order to highlight improvements in staff performance. In addition, the AVP is assigned the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the PD and a consolidated PD report is prepared at the end of each academic year and submitted to the Office of the President. The PD report includes information on workshops organized at both the university and college level, names of organizers, activities' titles, and statistics on staff attendance, in addition to a part dedicated for information on conducting research, incentives, and statistics on research conducted for the academic year 2016-2017. The Panel is of the view that the role of the AVP regarding professional training and monitoring should be broadened and not limited to 'looking at total number of PD attended by staff'. Quality of PD attended by faculty needs to also be considered and evaluated in terms of contribution to the achievement of institutional goals. Nevertheless, the Panel agrees that overall the Institution addresses this Indicator.

**Recommendation(s):**

- Strengthen efforts to develop the institutional research culture and research capacity, which would then be evidenced in more research outputs.
- Consider the quality of PD attended by faculty and evaluate it in terms of its contribution to the achievement of institutional goals.

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

## Standard 7

### Research

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

#### **Indicator 23: Research**

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

RUW has a 'Research Strategic Plan' and a 'Research Policy' that is in alignment with the 'National Research Strategy of Bahrain' and HEC requirements for organising scientific research in higher education institutions. Research is assessed using the balanced scorecard system, which measures activity against KPIs. These KPIs encompass conference attendance, presentations/papers/posters/books per faculty member per college per year. The percentage of publications achieved in 'prominent journals' is also included as a KPI. Furthermore, RUW has established the GS&R Committee, which is a standing committee of the Senate to manage and develop research. Examples of the efforts made by the GS&R Committee include the allocation of two working hours for research per week for faculty members, as mentioned earlier in this Report, and the use of external experts to respond to the research needs of the faculty. Although these two steps are positive, the Panel is of the view, as a result of engagement during the site visit, that they are not sufficient if the goal is for staff members to conduct high quality research. The Institution needs to re-evaluate its 'Research Policy' to examine the impact of research incentives on quality and the impact of research activity at RUW on Bahraini society or the local context, as explained later in this section of the Report. As a result of its scrutiny of the list of publications of RUW staff, the Panel is also of the opinion that more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that staff publish in prominent journals.

As per HEC's regulations, RUW allocates 3% of its total revenue to research. The allocation of this amount was confirmed upon scrutiny of the 'Finance and Accounting Policies', and the 'Audit Report'. The Panel is of the view that the allocated percentage of the total revenue for research is sufficient to support the relatively ambitious goals for research identified during the site visit interview with senior management and faculty. The Panel also advises that further consideration needs to be given regarding the extent to which an allocation of 3% is spent in line with the institution's mission and strategic objectives. As indicated earlier in this Report, RUW has a budget allocation process involving colleges and departments determining 'their respective resource and budgetary needs in order to meet the strategic objectives stated in their operational plans'. Annual budget allocation takes place each year to ensure that research related activities

are supported. In order for this to happen, faculty members submit their research proposals to college councils indicating their budget requirements.

The RUW 'Research Policy' identifies a research grant scheme, conference participation funds and other incentives as mechanisms intended to support the development of research. The Research Policy and the Conference Participation Policy promote participation in conferences. After attending a university-funded event, staff members are required to submit a report on their attendance to the relevant Dean. Reports are then discussed in the College Council. During the site visit, faculty members confirmed that their requests for conference attendance were accepted and funded, but the Panel could not identify a policy or set of procedures encouraging and supporting staff to convert their conference papers into articles for publication in high quality journals appropriate to disciplinary specialisations. Provided evidence indicate that RUW acknowledges the role of research in contributing to the private, public and social sectors by means of strengthening the link between RUW and private and institutional stakeholders; disseminating knowledge and understanding gained through research conducted by various academic programmes and relevant activities. However, the Panel is of the view that there is a need to monitor the extent of achieving these goals.

The Panel examined the provided evidence and noted that there is no concrete policy or procedure on the ethical and safe conduct of research. However, scattered provisions were found in some documents, for instance; the 'Human Resources Policies' document, does encompass some issues in this area in the form of the 'Code of Conduct for RUW Employees' and the 'Statement on Professional (Academic Faculty) Conduct'. In addition, some issues are addressed in the RUW 'Research Policy', which was approved by the BoT in February 2018, such as obliging all researchers to comply with the accepted research ethics standards (e.g. as regards transparency, impartiality, and the willingness to be (self) critical). Nonetheless, the panel's position is that ethical considerations- especially definitions, actions, procedures and penalties- need to be addressed more overtly in a distinct document developed for the purpose of managing ethics in research.

In line with HEC requirements, RUW Scientific Research Council was established in the academic year 2017-2018. One of the objectives of this council is 'to foster research culture through capacity building workshops'. The importance allocated to research is indicated in the self-appraisal forms used by academic staff members at RUW, which 'assigns 10% to research and the integral element of research for promotions at RUW'. According to the SER, external speakers both national and international are also invited to the Institution to present their research activities and their outcomes. A research forum is scheduled on a fortnightly basis for this purpose and to allow RUW staff to share their research. Overall, the Panel appreciates the institution's efforts in this important area and agrees that this Indicator is addressed.

## Recommendation(s)

- Re-evaluate the 'Research Policy' to examine the impact of research incentives on quality and the impact of research activity at RUW on Bahraini society and to ensure that staff publish in prominent journals.
- Address ethical considerations - especially definitions, actions, procedures and penalties- more overtly in a distinct document developed for the purpose of managing ethics in research.

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

### ***Indicator 24: Higher degrees with research (where applicable)***

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

**Judgement:** Addressed

The University only offers two Post-Graduate programmes in Drawing and Painting, and Design Management. Both programmes are described clearly in terms of programme specifications and PILOs to be achieved by graduates. CILOs are also identified and aligned with PILOs. Postgraduate students are offered an orientation session at the beginning of the programme, which provides an overview of the programme focusing on research requirements. They are also offered advice on the choice of a research topic.

The structure of postgraduate programmes consists of two semesters. The first semester is focused on advising the students on choosing a research topic and developing the thesis proposal. Once the thesis proposal has been approved, students are assigned to an academic supervisor for their actual research. In semester two, students continue to work on the development of their thesis under guidance and supervision and are required to present their work in seminars intended to check on their progress. During this period, supervisory meetings take place on a regular basis and all meetings are documented in a log. However, the Panel noted from evidence provided that the sample record of student-advisor meetings contains very general comments made by the advisor about the status of the thesis and lacks details of issues discussed with the students or obstacles impeding progress. The Panel advises the Institution to address this matter.

In line with the RUW 'Procedure for Student Evaluation of Courses', feedback is collected from all post-graduate students. Students' satisfaction is collected every semester through course and teacher evaluation forms, which include indicators to assess the students' satisfaction with the courses and the instructors. In addition, 'Graduate Exit Surveys' are also used to assess student

satisfaction with both the courses offered and teaching methods as well as other aspects of students' experience at RUW.

The SER details space resources available for post-graduate students (classrooms, seminar rooms, studios equipped with LCD projectors and a screen for display, computer laboratories, etc.). In the panel's view, the current infrastructure of the Institution is sufficient to meet the requirements of research-based programmes especially given the small number of programmes themselves and the limited number of students enrolled in them. The Library is equipped with learning materials, textbooks and recommended reading relevant to the courses offered in the post-graduate programmes. The Institution subscribes to E-Library, and ProQuest databases, both of which can be accessed from within the RUW premises or remotely. The Library also has access to Springer through which students can access more than 112,000 e-books and 1900 e-journals. However, through examining exit surveys for the Master of Design Management graduates, the Panel noted that students' dissatisfaction with the library services and resources is high (50%). The Panel viewed the library holdings and was concerned that they were primarily focused on textbooks. The need to expand library holdings beyond a focus on textbooks has already been noted in this Report; however, this is of particular importance to study at a post-graduate level.

According to the Assessment Policy, the supervisor serves as a member of the thesis examiners' panel, in addition to an external examiner from another university and an internal examiner who are both appointed by the College Post-Graduate Studies Committee. Assessment is guided by rubrics, which are available for the panel members, and includes an oral examination. The 'Assessment Policy' describes the role and responsibilities of external examiners for projects and theses and whose selection is in accordance with the HEC requirements and is guided by the 'External Examining and External Verification Policy'. The SER also states that the College of Art and Design conducts post-graduate workshops every year to enhance the capacity of the academic staff as supervisors, and the Post-Graduate Studies Committee's minutes of a meeting in 2017 suggest that a refresher session with the supervisor and internal examiners about *Viva* will be held. Overall the Panel agrees that the Institution addresses this Indicator.

### Recommendation(s)

None

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

## Standard 8

### Community Engagement

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

#### **Indicator 25: Community Engagement**

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

#### **Judgement:** Addressed

Community Engagement (CE) is specified in RUW's vision, mission and strategic plan and is operationalized in the 'Community Engagement Action Plan'. A 'Community Engagement Policy' also exists. As per the SER, there is a Community Education Committee (CEC), which is responsible for promoting involvement with the community by all colleges, departments, and divisions of RUW. Furthermore, RUW's employment contracts involve a provision stating that staff participation in CE activities is a formal requirement. Service to the Community is also part of the annual academic staff appraisal processes at RUW. CE counts for 10% of the staff member's appraisal, and there are specific responsibilities for CE that have been assigned to designated staff members based on their expertise and experience, which was confirmed by the Panel during the site visit. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that more effort is needed to introduce staff members to various appropriate CE activities that could be incorporated into research and into more courses formally in the form of service learning, which will make this area of academic endeavour -CE- more thoroughly integrated into the life of the Institution as a core function.

As provided in the SER and confirmed during the site visit and through evidence provided, RUW encourages students to be involved in CE activities through the 'A Credit' procedure, which is an achievement visible on students' transcript. Students can apply for the 'A Credit' for up to three times during their studies, in which they should provide a proof of acquiring 15 hours of engagement in various university/college activities. In addition, RUW has introduced a new course in the first semester of the academic year 2017-2018 to enhance students' understanding of CE. The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by RUW to encourage students to participate in CE activities, and to enhance their knowledge and experiences.

The CEC is responsible for collecting feedback from various stakeholders involved in CE activities using a survey instrument that is approved by the Senate. Feedback is collected following each organised activity. Results from surveys are then analysed and presented to the Deans Council in the form of a report so that improvements could be identified. Having perused some of the survey instruments implemented to elicit student feedback, the Panel is concerned firstly at the conceptualisation of what constitutes CE at RUW and also at the nature of the feedback provided. For some students, the criteria for judgement on a CE activity appeared to be the extent to which it provided 'fun'. The Panel is of the view that RUW should consider more

deeply what could constitute CE activities, particularly in relation to its vision and mission and to identify ways in which students' service could be reflected upon, in order to allow students to better understand their own relationships with society more generally.

RUW keeps a register of all CE activities. The Register includes evidence on various CE activities, for example: students' visit to the Riffa Elderly Parents Day Care, Bab Al-Khair project which was supported by INGAZ, various visits to Bahrain Red Crescent Society and National Bank of Bahrain Rehabilitation Centre, and Royal Charity Organization, also organizing the event of Think Pink. These activities are reflected in the CEC annual report, after being approved by relevant college councils and the Senate. The Panel notes with appreciation that many activities were focused on the learning needs of students. Alumnae also participate in certain CE activities (for example Forensic Accounting and the Fraud Examination Workshop series). The Panel encourages the University to further engage its alumnae in CE activities and concluded that the Institution addresses this indicator.

#### **Recommendation(s)**

- Further introduce staff members to various CE activities that could be incorporated into research and into more courses formally in the form of service learning.
- Consider more deeply what could constitute CE activities, particularly in relation to the institution's vision and mission and identify ways in which students' service could be reflected upon.

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