

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



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

**Master in Business Administration
College of Business Administration
University of Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 1 – 3 December 2014

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Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AIMS	Assessment Information Management System
AoL	Assessment of Learning
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CoB	College of Business Administration
DAC	Departmental Accreditation Committee
DAR	Deanship of Admission and Registration
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MCQs	Multiple Choice Questions
MIS	Management Information Systems
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OBE	Outcome Based Education
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PCAP	Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice
PEO	Programme Educational Objectives
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center

QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SAC	Students Advisory Committee
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UILO	University Intended Learning Outcomes
UoB	University of Bahrain

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the University of Bahrain

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Business Administration was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 1-3 December 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the college, these are: Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC); Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF); Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BSM); Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSBM) and Master in Business Management (MBA).

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Master in Business Administration (MBA) based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the University of Bahrain (UoB), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

UoB was notified by the DHR/QQA in May 2014 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of the programmes offered by its College of Business Administration with the site visit taking place in 1-3 December 2014. In preparation for the review, UoB conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER with appendices on the agreed date in September 2014.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Business and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised six external reviewers.

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

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

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

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

1.3 Overview of the College of Business Administration

The College of Business Administration (CoB) was reconstituted in 1991 after the reorganization of the Gulf Polytechnic (founded in 1981) into a number of departments. Currently there are four departments within the College: Department of Accounting, Department of Economics and Finance, Department of Management and Marketing and the Department of Islamic Banking which was recently established in November 2014. The College offers six academic programmes; these are the Bachelor of Science in Accounting (BSAC), Bachelor of Science in Banking and Finance (BSBF), Bachelor of Science in Business Management (BSBM), Bachelor of Science in Marketing (BSMK), Bachelor of Science in Islamic Banking and Finance (BSIBF) and the Master in Business Administration (MBA). For the academic year 2014-2015, there are 88 academic staff members supported by and 26 administrative staff members. The number of students enrolled in the College, in the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, totaled 5,227 students. The College of Business Administration is currently in the final accreditation stage of Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). Annual visits have taken place by the

assigned mentor for evaluation purposes and advice since 2011. An evaluation visit by the AACSB is scheduled to take place in 2015-2016

1.4 Overview of the Master in Business Administration

The Master in Business Administration is offered by the College of Business Administration. In 1987, Board of Trustees endorsed a Post-Graduate Program comprising a Post-Graduate Diploma (PGD) and MBA. The programme was temporarily suspended in 2004 in order to review its relevance to the market, and was reinstated in 2009 as an MBA programme with a new curriculum with specializations in Accounting, Banking and Finance, Management and Marketing. The MBA programme is managed by an MBA coordinator who is assisted by the Graduate Studies Committee as well as the college and departmental committees. The Programme is supported by 16 academic staff members who are supported by 16 support staff at college level. For the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015, the number of students enrolled in the programme totalled 56 students. To date, there are 151 graduates from the MBA programme.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Master in Business Administration

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

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 There is an academic plan in place which explains the aims of MBA programme with close reference to the UoB vision and mission statements. The MBA programme has a set of Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs) complemented by a set of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). The Panel notes that the MBA mission statement and its (PEOs) have recently been revised to better reflect its curriculum structure and views of its key stakeholders. A number of faculty meetings have been held specifically for the revision of MBA mission statement and its associated (PEOs) between in March and June 2014. The revised MBA mission statement has three distinct components (1) 'to provide students with high quality and state-of-art education programme in different concentrations areas (ii) to enhance leadership, ethical and other needed skills which are vital components of effective learning, research and community service, and (iii) to make graduates valuable assets to the public and private sectors'. The Panel is of the opinion that the revised mission statement is appropriate and consistent with the UoB vision and mission statements. The SER contains clear mappings of the MBA mission statement to the PEOs and of the PEOs to the UoB's strategic goals. During interviews, the Panel noted that the MBA programme team are aware of the revised mission statement and PEOs and their key implications for the MBA programme. The Panel appreciates that the MBA programme mission and PEOs are consistent with the mission and the strategic goals of the University of Bahrain in addressing the educational needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the region.
- 2.2 The MBA curriculum comprises 36 credit hours divided into 18 credit hours of core courses (six core courses of 3 credits each) to be normally studied in year one; and four optional courses in each one of the four concentration area (12 credits), and either a dissertation (6 credits) or an MBA project and an extra optional course (6 credits), to be normally studied in year two of the study programme. The Panel appreciates that an MBA project is included in the curriculum as an attractive and viable alternative to the MBA dissertation. Most students interviewed by the Panel are currently opting to do the MBA project and an extra option instead of an MBA dissertation. Within this framework, the Panel is of the opinion that the current student workload is appropriate. The MBA curriculum is designed essentially to provide progression in four concentrations of Accounting, Finance, Marketing and Management *via* a set of second year optional courses in these concentrations and course prerequisites. The Panel views these developments favourably. During interviews with faculty members, the Panel learned that due to the lack of demand for Accounting and Marketing concentrations, only the Management and Finance

concentrations are currently active and running. However, the Panel notes that, apart from Management concentration, which includes several optional courses in management and leadership, as it is required by an MBA curriculum, the other three concentrations provide a limited and an indirect coverage and progression in theory and practice of management and leadership. Whilst the Panel acknowledges that topics in management theory and practice are covered within various MBA courses; the Panel is of the view that there is a need for a second year core course in theory and practice of management and leadership to ensure students' progression and deepening of knowledge in theory and practice of management and leadership before they embark on their chosen concentration area. The Panel learned that the MBA curriculum is due for a major review in 2015 during which the curriculum would be revised. The Panel recommends that, in the upcoming review of the MBA programme, a relevant core course for each concentration is included in the curriculum to ensure a clear and direct progression on a year-on year basis in theory and practice of management and leadership.

- 2.3 The Panel explored the balance between knowledge and skills and between theory and practice within the current MBA curriculum. The Panel learned that faculty members, by and large, combine theoretical ideas with relevant case studies, assignments, practical projects, and presentations, in order to maintain an appropriate balance between theory and practice and between knowledge and skills in their individual courses. The Panel reviewed a number of MBA course portfolios and found that in most courses there is an appropriate balance maintained between theory and practice *via* relevant practical projects and case studies, and between knowledge and skills *via* relevant practical assignments. The Panel interviewed a sample of current MBA students and also a number of recent MBA graduates and noted that both groups view the balance between theory and practice, and knowledge and practical skills to be clear and consider these divisions to be useful and appropriate to their studies. The Panel appreciates that there is an appropriate balance between theory and practice and between knowledge and skills within the curriculum.
- 2.4 According to the SER, the MBA programme follows the AACSB requirements for accrediting the business degree programmes and is specifically aligned with the AACSB Criteria for Business Studies Programs 2013-2014. The Panel examined a sample of MBA course syllabus forms and noted that these documents are well designed containing detailed and relevant information on each course's aims, Course ILOs, teaching and assessment methods of each category of ILOs, as well as weekly lecture topics, and key text book and additional supporting texts and academic journals. The Panel discussed the preparation of course syllabus forms with faculty members and learned that they follow the guidelines of the UoB Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center as outlined in the IDEAS Handbook. The Panel noted that

faculty members normally include additional case studies and practical projects to supplement the teaching material and also periodically carry out informal benchmarking on their respective courses in order to keep up with current trends in their subject area. MBA students interviewed by the Panel indicated that course syllabus forms are distributed to them and they are fully aware of each course aims, ILOs and key text books. The Panel appreciates that the syllabus is accurately and fully documented with appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and published research findings.

- 2.5 The MBA programme Outcome Domains are based on Bloom's taxonomy and are divided into the conventional four categories of A: knowledge and understanding, B: subject –specific skills, C: thinking skills and D: general transferable skills. The MBA programme's ILOs (PILOs) are mapped clearly to the Outcome Domains and to the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs). The Panel is of the opinion that PILOs are at appropriate level and linked well to the MBA programme's aims and mission statement. The Panel finds that the PILOs are appropriately communicated to all stakeholders *via* the UoB website as well as in the MBA student Handbook. During interviews, the Panel noted that the MBA teaching faculty are aware of the PILOs and key linkages to the PEOs and MBA mission statement. Furthermore, the Panel learned from a sample of current students that they too have a fairly good awareness of the MBA programme's aims and learning outcome. The Panel appreciates that appropriate Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are in place and are aligned with the programme aims.
- 2.6 Each course syllabus form includes a list of Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOS) which the Panel finds to be at an appropriate level, clearly defined, and mapped to the PILOs. The Panel learned from interviews conducted with faculty members that CILOs are determined with close reference to the PILOs in line with the University's internal quality assurance guidelines and Assessment Strategy. The Panel also interviewed a sample of current MBA students and noted that students are aware of key CILOs as explained by the faculty members, and described in course syllabus forms. The Panel appreciates that the course intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the levels of the courses for which they were written, in terms of the complexity of knowledge, skills and competences achieved, and are appropriately mapped to the programme ILOs.
- 2.7 The guidelines in the 'Regulations of Study and Examinations at University of Bahrain' stipulate the use of a variety of teaching methods that support attainment of learning outcomes, the utilization of blended learning and the encouragement of personal responsibility for learning by the students. The SER states that a wide range of teaching methods are used including lectures, interactive teaching methods, research projects and case-based learning methods. From examining course

portfolios, the Panel noted that each course syllabus form shows how each type of CILOs is to be taught on a weekly basis. From provided evidence, the Panel noted the predominance of lectures, interactive teaching, critique of articles from newspapers and periodicals, as well as case studies and projects as the key teaching method used in the MBA programme. The use of ICT is also encouraged; however, the Panel noted that e-resources are not yet fully integrated into the curriculum (see recommendation in section 3.9). Faculty members interviewed by the Panel were able to discuss various teaching methods with close reference to CILOs and PILOS. The Panel also interviewed a sample of current MBA students and recent MBA graduates who confirmed that they have experienced various teaching methods listed in the course syllabus forms and, by and large, found these to be relevant to their learning experience. However; a number of current MBA students pointed out to the Panel that the delivery style of some of their lectures have been similar to those they have experienced in the undergraduate programme and thus there has been little value added in attending these lectures. The Panel is encouraged that the College acknowledges the need for improvement in the teaching methods and in providing the teaching staff with appropriate training with the use of more innovative and challenging teaching methods to enhance the MBA students' learning experience. This is evidenced from the initiatives included in the programme improvement plan. The Panel is of the view that adoption of an innovative range of teaching methods is to be encouraged by its written inclusion into a standalone teaching and learning policy for the College. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement a teaching and learning policy, appropriate to the MBA programme needs, and ensure that all staff are trained and assisted in the implementation of this policy.

- 2.8 The SER states that there is a clear and transparent assessment policy which is consistently applied *via* a wide range of assessment methods across the MBA programme. The Panel was provided with copies of the 'Regulations of Study and Examinations at the University of Bahrain', and the 'Assessment, Grading and Moderation' policy. Overall, the Panel views these assessment methods to be appropriate. During the site visit, the Panel notes that assessment methods of each category of CILOs and each weekly lecture topic are clearly identified in a sample of course syllabus forms which the Panel inspected. These assessment methods include case studies, assignments, review of articles, quizzes, mid-term and a final examination. During interviews conducted with faculty, the Panel noted that faculty members do indeed use a wide range of assessment methods to assess CILOs. However, it was noted that traditional mid-term and final examinations remain the key summative assessment methods of the MBA programme. The Panel notes that formative assessments are carried out *via* students' presentation and students' feedback; however, the Panel finds that the synergy between summative and formative assessment methods, at both course and programme levels, to be weak

and that formative assessment methods, in view of the Panel, are not fully and effectively integrated into the MBA assessment mechanisms. This weakness was recognized by the programme team in the SER ‘... the faculty members need to have further training and encouragement to utilize varied and creative formative assessment methods in the classroom’. The Panel is of the opinion that an effective and regular formative assessment is the key for improving MBA student’s learning experience and their performance in summative assessments. The Panel thus recommends that formative assessment methods to be fully integrated into the MBA curriculum assessment methods to ensure a more effective assessment mechanism and better students’ learning experience.

2.9 The SER states that ‘Assessment should be used to inform the students of their progress in learning and how it can be improved.’ The Panel notes that providing students with prompt feedback is mandated by the University Council Decision which stipulates that all assessments should be returned to students with clear comments and a model answer. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that assessments were returned ‘within a week’, and that they can request a re-mark of the final examination *via* an appeal process. The Panel notes that all assessment instruments include clear criteria for marking and that an anti-Plagiarism Policy is in place and is published in the Students Handbook. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are informed about assessment and plagiarism policies during the induction programme. The Panel appreciates that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the reliability and fairness of grading students’ achievements.

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

- The MBA programme mission and aims are consistent with the mission and the strategic goals of the University in addressing the educational needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the region.
- An MBA project is included in the curriculum as an attractive and viable alternative to the MBA dissertation.
- There is an appropriate balance between theory and practice and between knowledge and skills within the curriculum.
- The syllabus is accurately and fully documented with appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and published research findings.
- Appropriate Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are in place and are aligned with the programme aims.
- The course intended learning outcomes are appropriate to the levels of the courses for which they were written, and are appropriately mapped to the programme intended learning outcomes.
- Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure the reliability and fairness of grading students’ achievements.

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

- include a relevant core course for each concentration in the curriculum to ensure a clear and direct progression on a year-on year basis in theory and practice of management and leadership
- develop and implement a teaching and learning policy, appropriate to the MBA programme needs and ensure that all staff are trained and assisted in the implementation of this policy
- ensure that formative assessment methods are fully integrated into the MBA curriculum assessment methods to ensure a more effective student learning experience.

2.12 Judgement

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

3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 3.1 Admission to the MBA programme is governed *via* the university-wide admission requirements for the Master Degree Level. These requirements are clearly stated in SER. In addition, there are specific MBA admission requirements; these include a Bachelor's degree with a minimum GPA score of 2.67 out of 4.0, passing a personal interview and an Aptitude test, and a minimum score of above 6.0 in Academic IELTS or 80 in IBT TOEFL. The implementation of the admission procedures and criteria is overseen by the Deanship of Admission and Registration in collaboration with the MBA programme coordinator and the CoB Graduate Studies Committee. The Panel notes that the admission policies and procedures are published on the university website and in programme publications. From provided evidence and site visit interviews with programme staff and students, the Panel acknowledges that the admission criteria and procedures appropriately implemented. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the university admission policy is periodically reviewed based on students' performance in the academic programmes. The Panel appreciates that robust admission policies and procedures appropriate for the MBA programme are consistently implemented, widely published and periodically revised.
- 3.2 As indicated above, admission to the MBA programme is be carried out carefully within the framework of the university-wide admission policy and the MBA admission regulations. The Panel learned from its interviews with faculty members that admission to the MBA programme is highly competitive and is conducted carefully in practice to ensure that the admitted students' profile match the programme requirements. The Panel interviewed a sample of the current cohort of MBA students and noted that, overall, their profile is suitable for the MBA programme. This was evidenced from their work experience, performance on aptitude test and English language proficiency. The Panel appreciates that the profile of the programme students is consistent with the MBA admission requirements and is aligned with the MBA programme aims and objectives.
- 3.3 The MBA programme is managed by an MBA coordinator who has overall responsibility for the management of the programme. The Coordinator's key responsibilities are clearly stated in the Article 8 of the University Graduate Studies System. Within this system, the MBA Coordinator is expected to work closely with the Chairpersons of different departments and various academic committees' and be involved in their activities. The Coordinator is assisted by the Graduate Studies Committee which oversees all operational and academic issues related to the MBA program. The Committee comprises senior faculty members from all the CoB and is

responsible for administering all the detailed issues related to managing the program. All decisions and recommendations from the Graduate Studies Committee are endorsed by the College Council and consequently the University Council. Furthermore, in a series of interviews with faculty, the Panel noted that there are a number of special coordinators with clear responsibilities who deal with the day-to-day management of the MBA programme. These special coordinators are responsible for ensuring courses planning and delivery, time tabling and staff teaching load allocation, as well as inscribing the minutes of all departmental council meetings. These operational coordinators report to the MBA Coordinator, Departments Chairpersons and the Dean, depending on the level and the nature of their reports. The Panel appreciates that the operational management system in place is appropriate and robust and that there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the MBA programme.

- 3.4 The MBA programme depends mainly on faculty members from other departments of the CoB to teach MBA courses. At the time of the site visit, there was a sufficient number of staff to teach the current number of students with a staff to student ratio of 1:3 which is consistent with standard set by the UoB. The Panel notes that faculty members are academically well-qualified with PhD degrees in relevant specializations, current research output, and professional experience. In a series of interviews carried out with faculty, the Panel noted that staff, by and large, are aware of MBA programme' special requirements of teaching and research activities. The Panel also noted that visiting professors and part-time lecturers contribute effectively to the programme in their areas of expertise. Whilst the Panel appreciates that the faculty members contributing to the MBA programme are appropriately qualified to teach in all the areas and specializations needed for the MBA Programme, the Panel finds that this contribution impacts negatively on their teaching workloads. Moreover, it was evident to the Panel that MBA faculty lacks a clear and visible team-spirit and identity. The Panel is of the opinion that the MBA programme would significantly benefit from having core MBA teaching staff dedicated to the MBA programme and who work closely together as a team with a clear sense of identity and team- spirit, brought on and guided by an effective and strong team leadership. The Panel thus recommends that the College establish, within the CoB, a core 'MBA Team' with a clear identity and focus to enhance MBA programme delivery and to drive forward improvements in the MBA programme and its future development.
- 3.5 The MBA programme is embedded in the College of Business Administration which has a well-established, systemic approach for recruitment, scrutiny, selection and induction of new staff. Within this framework, each department has two committees, a Faculty Selection (Recruitment) Committee and an Academic Promotions Committee, exclusively for taking care of these activities. There are comprehensive 'Academic Promotion Regulations' of the University Council Resolution, which

make Promotion in the University a structured process. During interviews, the Panel learned about the stringent short-listing process involved in the appointment of new faculty members and for the attainment of tenure. From provided evidence and interview sessions, it is clear to the Panel that the CoB maintains high standards in the appointment of its staff and expects a high level of commitment from them. The Panel appreciates that clear and transparent procedures for the recruitment, promotion and retention of academic staff are in place and are implemented consistently. Staff appraisals currently involve only student evaluations on a semester basis. The Panel learned in its interviews with faculty members that a comprehensive evaluation of academic staff performance is done only at the time of promotion, and contract renewal in the case of non-Bahraini academic staff. There is thus scope for the introduction of a system of annual appraisals of all faculty members. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement formal mechanisms for the annual appraisal of academic staff, including a system for peer-reviews. The feedback from this appraisal can be used to support an appeal for promotion, the development of a teaching portfolio as well as the identification of professional development needs.

- 3.6 The University has a functioning Management Information System (MIS) with components for online Registration, Timetable Preparation, Online Advising, E-learning, Human Resources and Quality assurance. The SER describes the Online Registration System in detail, and during the on-site visit, staff in the Deanship of Admission and Registration Section described the registration process and the processes for maintaining student records with respect to admissions and registrations, faculty time-tabling, examination marks entry and processing of results. During interviews, the Panel learned that, subject to password compliance, faculty members are able to extract the information needed to manage the learning process, including timetabling, the submission of marks and student advising. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they have restricted access to the system *via* a secured login protocol and are able to register online. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel confirmed that that the reports they receive from the system allow for effective communication and decision-making. The Panel appreciates that the Management Information System is effective for the purpose of informed decision-making and is subject to appropriate controls to ensure the security of the system.
- 3.7 The University has appropriate policies and procedures to ensure the security of records which are described in detail in the SER. The Panel notes that both hard-copy and electronic copies of all critical records are maintained at different levels by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and in the Department. This was also confirmed during site visit interviews and the campus tour. In its interviews with the Information Technology (IT) Centre staff, the Panel was assured that records are

password-protected and access to the records and the authority to add to or alter records is strictly limited to appropriate parties. There are prescribed retention periods for records and back-ups are done automatically on a monthly basis. Moreover, the University has a Disaster Recovery System. In addition, the Information Technology Centre executes an electronic back-up every semester. The Panel is satisfied that, on the basis of the written evidence, a review of relevant files and the on-site visit, learner records are secure and results are accurate.

- 3.8 UoB has a purpose-built campus that meets the needs of staff and students and supports their academic activities. The facilities available to the College include classrooms, computer laboratories, staff offices and multipurpose halls. The University library is adequately resourced with reading spaces, computers, books, online catalogue and digital library. During the tour of the facilities the Panel visited two lecture venues and noted that the equipment required for lectures is adequate, but the quality of the seating and the tables the students can use to take notes during lectures need to be improved (this was also pointed out during students interviews). The Panel also visited a computer laboratory and noted that the College of Business has four computer laboratories, with 145 computing stations equipped with suitable hardware and software. The Panel finds the computer requirements of students to be adequately addressed. The visit to the library also confirmed that there are sufficient textbooks, journals and e-resources to meet the needs of the programme. The Panel acknowledges that the UoB campus and the College of Business Administration building provide an excellent learning environment. However, from the information provided, and during the campus tour, it was clear to the Panel that there is a lack of focus and differentiation regarding the MBA programme and its students, as far as key physical and material resources are concerned. The Panel views this lack of focus on the MBA programme physical resources' needs to be important and recommends that the College establish an MBA Centre to help to create an identity and focus for the MBA programme and to enhance MBA student' learning experience.
- 3.9 The SER documents the tracking system for the usage of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources. During interviews with administrative staff, it was confirmed that detailed tracking records are available and reports are generated relating to the usage of these facilities. The Panel found evidence of an effective monitoring system that provides data on the usage of laboratories; the College keeps a daily schedule of every laboratory's usage as they are normally used for computing sessions for most of the courses. The e-learning centre is responsible for tracking the use of e-resources and reports are provided for departments upon request. The Panel acknowledges that the tracking system is adequate for the evaluation of the utilization of the College's resources. However, the SER states that Blackboard is not commonly used by the faculty members in the MBA programme, and only few instructors use Moodle as e-learning resource. This was confirmed during interviews with faculty

members who indicated that most of them are not using e-learning platforms like 'BlackBoard'. The Panel recommends that an e-learning system is fully integrated into the MBA programme to better support students' learning and to enhance their overall educational experience.

- 3.10 The SER indicates in detail the range of support services available to all students including those on the MBA programme, with little differentiation of MBA students' needs from those of undergraduate students. Student guidance and support is provided through the Deanship of Student Affairs including training and development workshops in diverse areas such as leadership, computer literacy, scientific report writing and peer learning. The Student Advice and Guidance Department provides a number of services through its 28 staff members, including social, psychological and career counselling, disciplinary matters and character building. The UoB Library contains 59 staff members (14 are professional librarians) of which 31 staff members are located at the Central Library. The computer laboratories also have dedicated technicians who are assigned to support students with the use of the web portal where essential e-resources are housed. The adequacy of the support services were confirmed during the site visit tours and in interviews with students. The Panel appreciates that appropriate student support is in place to provide extensive support to students and enhance their learning experience. However, within this framework, the Panel would like to suggest a more focussed approach to provision of these services for the MBA students.
- 3.11 The Deanship of Student Affairs organizes an induction day for the newly-admitted students at the beginning of each academic year. The induction programme includes an overview of the academic programmes, rules and regulations and the social and educational services, as well as the location of buildings and facilities. This was confirmed during onsite interviews with staff and students. However, some students indicated that they were unable to attend the induction day due to the unsuitability of its timing for working students. The Panel recommends that the College conduct an induction programme tailored for the MBA students' educational needs.
- 3.12 The College implements the institutional Academic Advising Framework that details the responsibilities of academic advisors and the processes for tracking the students' academic progress. During interviews with academic advisors, the Panel was informed that all students are assigned an academic advisor at the beginning of their studies, and are required to meet with their advisors at least once every semester. The tracking of students' progress is done by the College in collaboration with the Deanship of Admission and Registration, to timely identify and provide support for at-risk students. Students with a GPA lower than 3.0 out of 4.0 are identified and requested to meet with their advisors who recommend a number of intervention measures such as help sessions, peer-tutoring sessions and extra-tutorial classes.

Students who are under probation are not allowed to register any courses without meeting with their advisors first. They are required to seek advice from their advisor to ensure that the students are taking the right courses and are guided on how to boost their GPAs. In addition, the Counselling and Guidance Unit (under the Deanship of Student Affairs) offers several programmes to support the students' academic progress and social welfare. The Panel acknowledges that the College has an adequate system and processes in place to identify and support at risk students

3.13 The Panel notes the extensive array of informal out-of-class activities that the university has in place to expand student experiences and knowledge, including the many student societies, the career day and the regular workshops on a wide range of topics. The student societies and clubs, cultural and social activities, sports and art fall under the auspices of the Student Activities Department (within the Deanship of Student Affairs), while the Training and Development Department conducts a wide range of workshops on Saturday mornings. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated their satisfaction with the opportunities provided to them to engage in informal learning experiences beyond the classroom. The Panel appreciates that a wide range of activities and resources for informal learning are provided to the programme students to expand their knowledge and experiences. The Panel, however, is of the opinion that there is a need to establish an MBA Centre to help to improve MBA students' learning experience and knowledge through informal interactions and learning, as suggested above (see recommendation in section 3.8).

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

- Robust admission policies and procedures appropriate for the MBA programme are consistently implemented, widely published and periodically revised.
- The profile of the programme students is consistent with the MBA admission requirements and is aligned with the MBA programme aims and objectives.
- The operational management system in place is appropriate and there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the MBA programme
- The academic staff are suitably qualified and have an appropriate range of specializations to teach on the MBA programme.
- Clear and transparent procedures for the recruitment, promotion and retention of academic staff are in place and are implemented consistently.
- The Management Information System is effective for the purpose of informed decision-making and is subject to appropriate controls to ensure the security of the system.
- Appropriate student support is in place to provide extensive support to students and enhance their learning experience.

- A wide range of activities and resources for informal learning are provided to the students to expand their knowledge and experiences.

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

- establish a core 'MBA Team' with a clear identity and focus and a strong leadership to enhance MBA programme delivery and to drive forward improvements in the MBA programme and its future development
- establish an MBA Centre to provide a physical presence for the MBA programme and to enhance MBA student' learning experience
- conduct an induction programme tailored for the MBA students' educational needs
- fully integrate current e-learning systems to the programme to enhance MBA student s' learning experience.

3.16 Judgement

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

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The SER identifies a set of PEOs and associated PILOs and CILOs which are assessed, and *via* which the aims of the MBA programme are to be achieved. In a series of interviews with faculty, the Panel noted that the faculty members are aware of the MBA's PILOs and PEOs, as expressed in SER, and how they can be achieved. The Panel also noted, that faculty members implement a range of direct and indirect assessment tools to measure the students' performance against the learning outcomes. From provided evidence and interview sessions, the Panel is of the opinion that the assessment methods currently in place are appropriate and capable of reliably assessing a set of MBA graduate attributes. The Panel appreciates that that the programme graduate attributes are clearly defined as achieved learning outcomes and are appropriately assessed.
- 4.2 The MBA programme is going through an accreditation process by the AACSB and as part of this process the programme is being 'benchmarked' for equivalence of academic standard with a number of regionally AACSB-accredited MBA programmes including those currently in operation by the University of Qatar, King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals and King Saud University. The Panel discussed benchmarking activities with faculty members who confirmed the AACSB accreditation process and its requirements for the MBA programme. The Panel considers these benchmarking activities as being useful and constructive. The Panel requested and was provided with the most recent AACSB report on the MBA programme. In view of the Panel, this report contains a number of key structural recommendations for achievement of accreditation and improvement of the current MBA programme. The Panel acknowledges that the College recognizes the need to 'improve the benchmarking process' and is planning to 'establish a policy and procedures for formal benchmarking'. The Panel concurs and recommends that the College develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures for the formal benchmarking to improve the standard in all key areas of the MBA programme.
- 4.3 The SER contains clear and detailed explanation on how the institutional and college assessment policies and regulations are implemented in practice. The responsibility for ensuring the consistent implementation of the college assessment policies and regulations is shared by the 'Examination Moderation' the 'Grade Distribution' and the 'Quality Assurance' Committee. At the end of each semester, a Course Assessment Report is prepared to summarize the course assessment and to propose improvements for the course outcomes that have not been met based on the benchmark set by the College. The Quality Assurance Committee conducts regular

reviews of the course files to ensure that faculty members are adhering to the assessment guidelines. The 'Examination Moderation' and 'Grade Distribution' committees prepare moderation reports in regards to the moderation of assessment, exams, and grading to ensure consistency and fairness. Based on provided evidence and conducted interviews, the Panel is satisfied that assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, and monitored.

- 4.4 There are clear mechanisms in place to ensure the alignment of course assessments to learning outcomes. Faculty members interviewed by the Panel confirmed that each course specification includes information on how each category of its ILOs including category A (Knowledge and understanding), B (Subject Specific Skills), C (thinking skills) and D (general transferable skills), are to be assessed *via* a range of assessment methods including examinations, quizzes, student presentations, and projects. From the scrutiny of course portfolios, the Panel noted that a Course Assessment Matrix is used for the mapping of CILOS with the corresponding assessments tools and final results. The Panel appreciates that appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure the alignment of course assessments to learning outcomes.
- 4.5 The SER states that the College has a well- established moderation system for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievement. Each assessment instrument is carefully moderated from the initial design to the submission of students' results. From the review of provided evidence during the site visit, the Panel noted that there are clear mechanisms and procedures in place for internal moderation of assessment instruments and grading of student's work, involving course instructors, course coordinators and the Curriculum Committee. These procedures, as detailed in the SER, were confirmed to the Panel during interviews with MBA faculty members. The Panel examined a sample of course portfolios and found that there are indeed clear evidence of internal moderation of assessment instruments and students' grades. The Panel notes with appreciation that the mechanisms and procedures in place for internal moderation are robust and appropriate. The Panel encourages the College to ensure the implementation of these procedures for both single and multi-section courses.
- 4.6 There is no external moderation system in place for external moderation of MBA assessment questions and students' internally assessed work including the MBA projects. The Panel discussed this issue with faculty members who confirmed the complete lack of external moderation in all courses except the MBA dissertation. The Panel views the lack external moderation of the assessment procedures to be a serious shortcoming of the current assessment system, particularly for the benchmarking of academic standards against other institutions. The Panel recommends that a system of external moderation at the programme level to be put

in place to ensure consistency and fairness of internal assessment procedures and comparability of the standard achieved with other institutions.

- 4.7 The College implements a number of mechanisms to ensure that the level of students' achievement is comparable to other reputable programmes. The Panel examined (1) a sample of students' assessed work *via* MBA course portfolios, (2) a randomly selected sample of MBA projects and (3) a sample of MBA dissertations. The Panel noted that summative assessment of MBA courses, by and large, is conducted *via* a system of mid-term and final examinations; however, it is acknowledged that there is evidence of assessed students' projects and assignments in the course portfolios. The Panel noted that students' responses to essay type questions of summative examinations, overall, are rather brief and lacking sufficient analysis and discussion. By contrast, the Panel found some evidence of analysis and creative thinking in students' assessed course projects and assignments. With regard to the MBA projects, the Panel finds that, overall, these are of good quality and well prepared. However, the Panel noted that a wide-range of topics are covered in the MBA projects, with some falling outside the scope of an MBA programme. The Panel views the MBA project to be an important component of the MBA curriculum and would encourage faculty to enhance standards by ensuring that the focus of an MBA project, in all concentrations, would be mainly on the analysis of relevant management and leadership issues consistent with the requirement of an MBA programme. The Panel also reviewed a small number of MBA dissertations. The Panel is of the opinion that whilst these are well researched and of good quality, they appear to be extremely resource intensive and time consuming. Furthermore, in view of the Panel, the overall standard achieved is consistent with that of a research degree type programme rather than the standard normally is expected of an MBA project. Overall, the Panel finds that the standard of students' achievement to be comparable to that of other similar local and regional institutions.
- 4.8 The College implements appropriate mechanisms to assure the academic standards of graduates. The CILOs are mapped to the PILOs and the level of the achievement of the PILOs is then evaluated. Consequently, the Articulation matrix enables the mapping of PILOs to PEOs to assess the attainment of programme outcomes. Provided evidence of the final results and grade distribution indicate that the level of achievement of MBA graduates meets the programme aims. The Panel acknowledges that in seeking accreditation from the AACSB, the MBA graduates standards are further benchmarked to those of other accredited institutions. The Panel met a group of recent MBA graduates, most of which hold managerial positions, and found them to be communicative and able to answer questions appropriately. The Panel notes with appreciation that the graduates' achievements, as demonstrated by final results, quality of projects and theses (see section 4.7), as well as alumni and employers

surveys' results, are consistent with the MBA mission and meet the programme aims and PILOs.

- 4.9 A cohort analysis relating to the 2012-13 MBA graduates was made available to the Panel. From studying the retention rates, the Panel finds them to be appropriate. However, according to this document, 11 students graduated in 2012-13 academic year with the length of study period varying between 5-10 semesters and GPA between 3.12 and 3.78. The Panel finds that length of study period significantly varies amongst this cohort of graduates: 5 graduating in 5 semesters; 3 in 8 semesters; 1 in 7 semesters; 1 in 9 semesters and 1 in 10 semesters. In view of the Panel such variation in the length of study period is not normally associated with a full-time MBA programme. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that, on average, students spend around 3.35 years to complete the MBA programme, with the maximum length of study period currently allowed being 8 semesters. The Panel was also informed that due to the fact that most students are working, they are unable to register the number of courses as designed in the progression plan. The Panel acknowledges that MBA students are working while studying; however, is of the opinion that an appropriate length of study for a full-time MBA cohort - excluding foundation courses - should not normally exceed 5 semesters. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement effective mechanisms to shorten the MBA cohort's average length of study period to a level consistent with international norms for a full time MBA programme.
- 4.10 As indicated earlier (see section 2.2), students are required to complete either a dissertation (6 credits) or an MBA project and an extra optional course (6 credits), as part of the study programme. The SER details the procedures and policies in place for the supervision of projects and these, including the rules and responsibilities of the supervisors and students. These regulations are documented in the MBA Student Handbook and are available to all stakeholders. The Panel notes that the Graduate Studies Committee is responsible for the initial approval of the theses proposals and the appointment of the supervisor; which is then forwarded to the College Council and then to the University Graduate Council for final approval. The Panel also notes the involvement of an external examiner in the theses examination committees. From its interviews with faculty members, the Panel noted that they are aware of these policies and key implications for the supervision of students. Moreover, the students and graduates interviewed by the Panel were, by and large, satisfied with the arrangements in place concerning the supervision of MBA dissertation projects, as well as with the quality of supervision that they have received. The students also confirmed their awareness of the plagiarism policies of the dissertation. The Panel appreciates that robust policies and procedures are implemented for the supervision and assessment of MBA dissertations and projects.

- 4.11 There is a functioning Programme Advisory Committee (PAC) comprised of the MBA Coordinator and seven representatives from governmental and private sectors. The PAC has clear terms of reference and meets regularly to advise on various professional and academic issues, as well as to discuss mutual collaboration projects between the programme and the industry. During its interviews with the PAC members, the Panel noted that they are aware of their key role in programme development and are willing to provide expert advice to improve and up-date the MBA programme. In addition, the programme has a Students Advisory Committee (SAC) comprised of five senior students and is constituted annually. The Panel notes that the suggestions provided by the PAC and the SAC are discussed in the Graduate Studies Committee's meetings and incorporated, if appropriate, in the programme improvement plans. The Panel is of the view that the advice given by these committees is of key importance and encourages the College to make more effective use of (PAC) framework to update the MBA and ensure its relevance to the Bahrain's economy (see recommendation in section 5.8).
- 4.12 The College conducts an 'Alumni Survey' and an 'Employers Survey' to ascertain the level of satisfaction of key stakeholders with the graduates profile. The results of the evaluation of PILOs by recent programme graduates show that the highest ratings were for the PILOs 'demonstrate the skills necessary to conduct independent research' and 'develop a thorough understanding of key functions of business', both of which received a rating of 4.1 of 5.0. Employers surveyed during the academic year 2013-2014 rated the three PEOs above the set benchmark of 3.5 out of 5.0 (4.10, 3.82, and 4.16 respectively). The highest rating for PILOs by employers was for PILO (f) 'demonstrate the skills necessary to conduct independent research' (4.06) and PILO (b) 'integrate the knowledge and skills acquired across business functions' (4.01). The Panel notes with appreciation that focus groups were conducted with the programme alumni and employers to gain more insight on their views and document their suggestions for the improvement of graduate standards. The Panel considers the overall level of satisfaction expressed by key stakeholders in these surveys and focus groups to be appropriate for this programme.
- 4.13 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- Graduate attributes are clearly defined as achieved learning outcomes and are appropriately assessed.
 - Appropriate mechanisms are in place to ensure the alignment of course assessments to learning outcomes.
 - The mechanisms and procedures in place for the internal moderation of assessment instruments and grading of student's work are robust and appropriate.

- The level of graduates' achievements, as demonstrated by final results, quality of projects and theses, as well as alumni and employers surveys' results, meet the programme aims and learning outcomes.
- Robust policies and procedures are implemented for the supervision and assessment of MBA dissertations and projects.
- Focus groups were conducted with the programme alumni and employers to gain more insight on their views and document their suggestions for the improvement of graduate standards.

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

- develop and implement appropriate policies and procedures for the formal benchmarking to improve the standard in all key areas of the MBA programme
- put in place a system of external moderation at the programme level to ensure consistency and fairness of internal assessment procedures and comparability of the standard achieved with other institutions
- ensure that the focus of an MBA project, in all concentrations, would be mainly on the analysis of relevant management and leadership issues consistent with the requirement of an MBA programme
- develop and implement effective mechanisms to shorten the MBA cohort's average length of study period to a level consistent with international norms for a full time MBA programme.

4.15 **Judgement**

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

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 5.1 The policies, procedures and regulations, and particularly the academic policies regarding students' admission, progression and transfer, are published on the university website and the MBA handbook and are made known to the different stakeholders. Many of the academic regulations and their application are fully discussed in the College and Department councils. Interviews with faculty members revealed that these policies and procedures are applied effectively and consistently across all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Students interviewed by the Panel also confirmed that they are informed about the institution's policies and procedures during the induction day, and that their inquiries are adequately addressed. Additionally, the Internal Audit Office plays an important role in monitoring the effectiveness and consistent application of institutional procedures. The Panel appreciates the effective dissemination and implementation of the university and college policies, procedures and regulations.
- 5.2 Overall the hierarchy of management at the university, at the college and at the department levels is appropriate and adequate to ensure effective management. The MBA programme is led by an MBA Coordinator; who is assisted by the Graduate Studies Committee, and is expected to work closely with the Chairpersons of different departments and various academic committees, and be involved in their activities. Participation by the faculty in the management of the programme through committees is a good practice. However, whilst this system provides for a smoothly operating management system, it might not always be conducive to the emergence of a strong system of academic leadership, where greater levels of individual initiative and insight are required. As indicated earlier, the Panel is of the opinion that the MBA programme would significantly benefit from having core MBA team guided by an effective and strong team leadership. The Panel thus recommends that the College appoint a Programme Leader, rather than a coordinator, with full authority to work with the MBA team and focus on the development of the programme and its leadership.
- 5.3 There is a quality assurance structure at all levels of the university: a QA committee at the department level, the QA office at the college level, and a Center for Quality Assurance exists at the university level. This structure communicates the information and monitors the implementation of the quality assurance measures set by the University. The assessment cycle is clear and can be easily followed. There is an assessment management information system to house all the data of evaluation

reports and feedback. The internal audit function is also a component of the quality assurance management system and it plays an important role in quality assurance monitoring. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that the last change in the programme of study in the College was initiated by the Internal Audit Department. The Panel reviewed the internal audit report that was available for the MBA programme and found it to be very informative and useful. The Panel believes that greater importance should be attached to the findings of such reports and duly acted upon. The Panel appreciates that a clear quality assurance management system is in place and is consistently implemented and monitored.

- 5.4 The SER indicates that a number of seminars and workshops have been held to explain the quality assurance system and concepts to academic and administrative staff members. In addition, some faculty members have participated in QA seminars abroad, conducted by the AACSB. The Panel commends this practice. Meetings with the faculty and staff revealed that they have a reasonable understanding of the quality assurance system in place, and they understand their role in applying this system. This was deduced from the capacity to 'speak' the language of OBE by everyone interviewed by the Panel, such as the vocabulary of CILO's, PILO's and PEO's in explaining and answering the Panel inquiries and pointing out the importance of their alignment. However, evidence from some course files did not always concur. The Panel acknowledges that educating educators, particularly those with PhDs in their area of disciplinary specialization, that there are indeed more effective ways of teaching and facilitating student learning than the ways they were taught, is a herculean task requiring patience and the value of good example. The Panel is pleased to note that the Department has an ongoing initiative in its Improvement Plan to 'Organize training workshops regularly for academics and support staff for better understanding of quality assurance and their role in ensuring effectiveness of Ongoing provision'. The Panel appreciates that the Department provides capacity-building opportunities for faculty members to enhance their understanding of quality assurance concepts. The Panel suggests that the Department encourage faculty members to attend these training workshops to establish a greater understanding of QA's importance and practices at the department and college levels. The Panel also encourages the Department to implement the principles of Change Management, from seeking college and departmental 'champions' to the regular showcasing of the examples of those who have made the transition.
- 5.5 An institutional policy for the development of new programmes has been approved by the University Council in October 2013. The Panel notes the comprehensive requirements and procedures to permit carefully considered and effective development of new programmes. These include formal labor market studies, study plans, benchmarking studies, assessment and teaching policies, as well as feedback

from internal and external stakeholders. The Panel acknowledges that robust procedures are in place for the development of new programmes and encourages the College to monitor its implementation to ensure that the new programme is relevant, fit for purpose, and comply with existing institutional regulations.

- 5.6 Arrangements are in place for internal programme evaluation, the QAC Director's 'Quality Manual for DAC Committees' outlines the preparation of an internal SER for each Department (QF-23-rev.a.1) and the preparation of the QAAC Self Evaluation Improvement Plan (QF-25-rev.a.2). A departmental quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report along with an improvement plan is submitted to the university quality assurance center. This practice is commended. The SER generally refers to the refinement of the process initiated in the 2012-2013 academic year under the supervision of the College's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee which set out to refine the PILOs of the College's various programmes, along with the development of an Assessment of Learning (AoL) plan in compliance with the accreditation requirements of the AACSB. In essence this has seen the refinement of the 'mapping system' of CILOs to PILOs and PEOs as currently exists. The value of the process is clearly visible in the generally tight integration of this process already commented upon elsewhere in this report. The Panel appreciates that quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report, together with an improvement plan, is submitted to the University Quality Assurance Center.
- 5.7 The University has a policy of reviewing the programmes every 5 years. Adopting this policy by the College in 2013 resulted in four revised programmes. The new programmes have been a culmination of various inputs. One was a demand from students, another was the influence of the AACSB as the proposed accreditation body for the College's programmes; while a third was undoubtedly the input of the Departmental Review Committees. The procedure followed ensures that changes in the programme are drawn from a wide range of international benchmarked programmes and local inputs. The Panel commends this practice. To ensure that the new programme complies with existing regulations, it was reviewed at several management levels up to the University Council. The Panel appreciates that a robust system is implemented for the periodic review of programmes to ensure their relevance and stability. The Panel notes that the MBA programme is due for its next periodic review in 2015.
- 5.8 The College conducts a number of surveys to collect stakeholders' feedback; these include: an 'Employer Survey', a 'Senior Exit Survey' and an 'Alumni Survey'. There is evidence in the SER that the results of these surveys are analyzed and are made available to the stakeholders. The Panel discussed these issues with a sample of employers, PAC members and a group of alumni. The Panel learned that key

stakeholders are consulted on some of the key developmental issues *via* planned meetings and annual surveys and that some of their recommendations for programme improvement have been considered by the College. The Panel also noted the strong willingness on the part of these key stakeholders to be more actively involved with faculty in order to improve the MBA programme. The Panel is of the opinion that the suggestions and recommendations expressed by the MBA stakeholders are highly relevant for the continuous improvement of the quality and standard of the MBA programme and thus recommends that appropriate mechanisms to be put in place to ensure a speedy and effective implementation of key recommendations in the upcoming review of the MBA programme.

- 5.9 The SER states that 'CoB believes that academic members are one of the main keys to the attainment of this commitment and this could be achieved through ongoing professional development process.' The Panel acknowledges that the CoB provides encouragement for the personal development of faculty members in the pursuit of their academic careers. This was confirmed by faculty members during site visit interviews. However, there was no evidence that these activities are linked to formal training needs analysis or staff appraisal. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a strategy for staff development, linked to staff appraisal, to evaluate and enhance the professional capabilities of faculty members. The lists of conference and workshop attendance by individual staff are impressive. The review of the SER and the CVs of the faculty members shows that inevitably the greatest number of entries captured in the 'Faculty Professional Development and Activity' table refer to faculty members attending discipline specific conferences and workshops. The Panel acknowledges this as a healthy trend but, in keeping with recommendations made elsewhere in the report (see section 5.4), wish to stress the need for faculty members to also become sufficiently familiar with teaching and assessment methods as well as soft skills. The Panel is encouraged that the programme has an ongoing initiative to 'provide professional development activities for faculty that promote both pedagogical and professional excellence'. The Panel concurs and urges the College to expedite the implementation of this initiative.
- 5.10 All the departments within the College have created Programme Advisory Committees which are intended to fulfil the function of keeping the departments abreast of labour market needs and trends as well as the educational performance and professional needs of industry. The PACs are now also seen as industry contacts or conduits through which the departments can access collaborative agreements in areas such as research projects for faculty and senior student projects. These are all healthy developments acknowledged by the Panel which suggests that as the system becomes more entrenched in the culture of the departments, might be further expanded to embrace a wider range of participants from the appropriate industries in a bid to further widen the benefits for both the department and industry

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

- The university and college policies, procedures and regulations are effectively disseminated and consistently implemented.
- An Internal Audit system is in place to monitor the quality assurance processes and follow up the implementation of relevant recommendations from internal and external parties.
- A clear quality assurance management system is in place and is consistently implemented and monitored.
- The College provides capacity-building opportunities for faculty members to enhance their understanding of quality assurance concepts.
- Quality assurance assessment is conducted annually and a self-evaluation report, together with an improvement plan, is submitted to the University Quality Assurance Center.
- A robust system is in place for the periodic review of programmes to ensure their relevance and stability.
- The involvement of, and the recommendations provided by the AACSB contribute to the programme improvement plans.

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

- appoint an MBA Programme Leader, rather than a coordinator, with full authority to work with the MBA team and focus on the development of the programme and its leadership
- put in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure a speedy and effective implementation of key recommendations in the upcoming review of the MBA programme
- develop and implement a strategy for staff development, linked to staff appraisal, to evaluate and enhance the professional capabilities of faculty members
- expedite the implementation of professional development activities for faculty to enhance their pedagogical and professional excellence.

5.13 **Judgement:**

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

6. Conclusion

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

There is confidence in the Master in Business Administration of the College of Business Administration offered by the University of Bahrain.