



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature
College of Arts
University of Bahrain
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date of the Review: 3 - 7 December 2017
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Acronyms

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of the Department
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
ITC	Information Technology Centre
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QAO	Quality Assurance Office
UILOs	University Intended Learning Outcomes
UoB	University of Bahrain

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

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

A Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Arts at the University of Bahrain (UoB) was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain.

UoB was notified by the DHR/BQA on 6 March 2017 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of a set of programmes offered by College of Arts with the site visit taking place on 3-7 December 2017. These programmes are: Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature, Master in Arabic Language and Literature, Bachelor in Islamic Studies, Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature, and Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies. In preparation for the review, UoB conducted a self-evaluation of the above-mentioned programmes and submitted the self-evaluation reports with appendices on the agreed date on 2 July 2017.

The DHR constituted of three panels consisting of experts in the academic fields relevant to the programmes above and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. A total of seven reviewers participated in the reviews of the programmes.

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature 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 Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature. 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 and administrative staff of the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature.

C. Overview of the College of Arts

The College of Arts is considered one of the earliest colleges that have been established in the University of Bahrain according to the Emiri-Decree No: 12 of 1986. The College included, during its initial years and after its separation from the College of Science, three departments, namely: the Department of Islamic Studies, the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, and the Department of General Studies. This was applied until the year 1999 when an approval was issued concerning the restructuring of the academic departments of the College, where the Department of General Studies was replaced by the Department of Social Sciences and the discipline of Fine Arts was separated from the latter and associated with another new department (the Department of Mass Communication and Tourism). In addition, the language courses (French, German, and Japanese) were transferred to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, in order to include the English language and the remaining languages mentioned above. Since a few years, the name of the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature has been adjusted to become the Department of English Language and Literature, in addition to associating the Centre of English Language and Bahrain Credit Centre as centres under the University's senior management. In

2009, the Department of Psychology was transferred to the College of Arts, and in 2016, the Centre of Fine Arts and Heritage was also transferred to the College of Arts. Currently, the College includes (5) department, namely: Department of Arabic language and Islamic Studies, Department of Social Sciences, Department of English language and Literature, Department of Psychology, and Department of Mass Communication and Tourism.

D. Overview of the BA in Arabic Language and Literature Programme

The Bachelor Programme in Arabic Language and Literature is offered by the College of Arts, where the Head of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department is responsible for the management of the programme with the assistance of the various committees in the Department. The admission to the undergraduate programmes of Arts was under the name of Arts-Preparatory without mentioning the discipline until the year 1996. The total number of students registered in the programme is (476). The number of graduates for the last three years up to the writing of this report has reached (87) students. There are (18) full-time faculty members working in the Department, and supported by (3) administrative staff.

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	Limited Confidence

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 1.1 The Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature programme has a clear academic plan demonstrating how the programme contributes to achieving the strategic plan of the University (2016-2021). The programme has six clear educational objectives (PEOs) including: qualifying students in terms of scientific and literature aspects, enriching their knowledge of the Arabic language, developing their sense of language & literature, preparing them for postgraduate studies, deepening their sense of belonging to Arabism and Islam, and directing them to interact with modern cultures. These objectives are consistent with the university's mission that seeks to achieve 'excellence in teaching, learning, creative research, producing and publishing knowledge, and developing the student's personality'. These PEOs have also been mapped to the college mission and the strategic goals of the University. During interviews of the site visit conducted with the senior management of the programme, faculty members, and students, it was revealed to the Panel that they are aware of the aims and objectives that the programme seeks to achieve. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the Bachelor programme in Arabic language and literature has a clear academic plan that includes appropriate educational objectives in line with the mission of the College of Arts and the University.
- 1.2 The current curriculum of the Bachelor programme in Arabic Language and Literature consists of (128) credit hours, allocated over (8) academic semesters, where each semester (from the first semester to the sixth) contains (6) courses (3 credit hours per course). The seventh semester contains (5) courses (3 credit hours per course) alongside one course with (2 credit hours), while the eighth semester comprises the capstone project course (Capstone Project-ARAB 488) which is allocated (3 credit hours). The Panel recognizes that the distribution of courses throughout the study plan ensures an appropriate workload for the students, and is compatible with other similar programmes, which was confirmed by the interviewed students during the site visit. The study plan provides a course-by-course progression starting from general foundational courses that provide the student with basics of the undergraduate study (e.g. 'Language Skills (1)' (ARAB110), 'Modern History of Bahrain and Citizenship' (HIST122), 'Islamic Culture' (ISLM101), 'Principles of Computer Science' (ITBIS105), 'Principles of Statistics' (STAT105)). It moves to primary specialized courses (e.g. 'Arabic Dictionaries' (ARAB119), 'Research Resources in Literature, Language and Rhetoric' (ARAB181), 'Language Skills (2)' (ARAB 210), 'Generative Grammar Science' (ARAB213), and 'Ancient Prose Art (1)' (ARAB231)), then to more specialized courses, and finally to the graduation project course (ARAB488). In addition, the list of pre-requisites is appropriate to the study courses in order to insure a smooth course-by-

course progress. There are also (3) courses in the programme dedicated to the English Language, which were designed for all the Humanities programmes. The Panel notes that the curriculum of the programme contains courses required for the Bachelor degree in Arabic Language and Literature and covers various aspects of the Arabic Language different fields, and achieves a balance between knowledge and skills, as well as, theory and practice. The Panel appreciates that the programme's curriculum is organized in an appropriate manner, which allows a course-by-course progression, balance between knowledge and skills, theory and practice, and assurance of a suitable study loads.

- 1.3 The specification of the programme's courses is documented through a standard form issued by the University Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC). The specification of the course includes: the course syllabus and its distribution throughout the semester, its objectives, its intended learning outcomes, a matrix mapping between the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), the teaching methods, and the approaches of assessing the course outcomes and its scientific references. By reviewing the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and specification of the courses, the Panel found that the specification of the courses is well designed and that their content is aligned with the Bachelor's level, as well as, the objectives and aims of the programme. However, the Panel noted that the syllabi of some courses are not matched with their titles. For example, in the courses 'Language Skills (1)' (ARAB110), and 'Language Skills (2)' (ARAB210), their syllabi do not cover -in a balanced integrated manner- the major four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), or develop their practice. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should review the content of these two courses, to ensure that their syllabi are appropriate, in terms of depth and breadth. Moreover, the Panel observed that the content of some courses is neither complete nor up to date, such as 'Language Skills (1)' (ARAB110), 'Language Skills (2)' (ARAB210), 'Schools and Approaches of Grammar' (ARAB416), and 'Citations in Language and Grammar' (ARAB454). Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should review the courses' specifications and their file contents, to ensure their accuracy and that they cover all required information, as these files and specifications are the reference on which faculty members and programme managers depend for the delivery of the programme.
- 1.4 The SER includes several lists of PILOs, where the first list includes (5) outcomes, the second list (10) outcomes, and the third list (11) outcomes. The second list was mapped to the PEOs, whereas the third list was mapped to the University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs). The Panel observed that when mapping the CILOs, these lists were not used, as the CILOs had been mapped to another list that includes (8) of the PILOs. During the site visit, the programme's managers, interviewed by the Panel indicated that this matter could have been resulted from the continuing reviews that the

programme has recently been subjected to. They also confirmed that the programme intended learning outcomes are (5). By examining these (5) outcomes, the Panel found that they are appropriate to the programme in terms of their level and specialization. However, the Panel observed that these learning outcomes were not written in a measurable way, and that they were written in the context of being aims rather than outcomes. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should rewrite the PILOs to be measurable, and ensure that all the documents include a list of outcomes that are approved by the programme.

- 1.5 The CILOs include clear learning outcomes that were mapped to the PILOs. However, this mapping process is inaccurate, due to the instability of the PILOs list (see paragraph: 1.4). By examining the course files, the Panel found that they are generally appropriate to the course level and type, and that they are often written in a measurable way. However, the Panel observed that the number of these outcomes tends to be high; it also observed that there are inaccurate and non-measurable verbs such as ("acquire", and "be familiar"). Thus, the Panel advises the College to review the PILOs to be more selective and measurable; it also urges the college to review the matrix of mapping the CILOs to the PILOs after updating them.
- 1.6 The University has a strategy of teaching and learning that identifies the basic principles, which faculty members should take into account during the teaching and learning processes, such as: encouraging students self-learning, using multiple teaching methods and various means to create interactive learning among students, and making use of mixed learning methods (classroom study and e-learning), in addition to incorporating scientific research findings and updates in the teaching and learning processes both inside and outside the classrooms. The course files provided during the site visit indicate that the courses specification determine the mechanisms and strategies of teaching and learning required in every course, and how they contribute to achieving its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). In addition, students interviewed by the Panel during the site visit emphasized the variety of teaching and learning mechanisms used in the delivery of the programme and its courses, including: lectures, discussions, presentations, applications, groups, visits, technologies, external activities, researches, using libraries, increasing the obtained terminologies, action research, and classroom debates. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a variety of teaching and learning methods followed by the programme, which are appropriate to the programme, and contribute to achieving its ILOs. Nevertheless, the Panel observed the limited number of mechanisms that encourage the students to participate in the learning process and support their self-learning skills. Although, e-learning is described in the UoB's teaching and learning strategy and there is an e-learning platform, the Panel found, through its tour at Zain E-Learning Centre and interviews with faculty and students, that there is a limited use of e-learning in the programme. The e-learning platform is often used as a means to

save the learning materials, while other features of the platform are not used in an effective manner so as to contribute to achieving the programme outcomes that are related to its discipline, as well as its general outcomes. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should apply procedures that contribute to using the e-learning appropriately, and in line with the teaching and learning policy of the University, and measure its effectiveness in achieving the PILOs.

- 1.7 Article (52) of the UoB examinations system states that ‘assessment of students’ performance in the courses is implemented through conducting tests, examinations, research assignments, projects, homework, and other learning assessment methods that are included in the general rules developed by the Department Council to evaluate students’ performance in all courses, additionally, the course instructor declares the assessment methods included in the course outline, as well as the way of allocating the percentage grade over the assessment activities specified for the course and the final examination’. By reviewing the course files provided during the site visit, the Panel found that faculty members are keen to clarify the assessment tools and the grade distribution through the courses specification. Students interviewed during the site visit, confirmed that the course specification is distributed to them in the first lecture of each semester. In addition to that, students and staff are also informed about policies and procedures of assessment through different paper publications, such as the department and the college catalogs, the student handbook, the faculty handbook, or via the university website. Through the SER and interviews with the students, the Panel found that examination papers and classwork, incorporated with the instructors’ comments, are returned to the students to be reviewed with the course instructor during the office hours declared by each faculty member. However, the Panel noted that this matter is not applied consistently for all assessment tools, as the Panel found during interviews conducted with the students that some faculty members do not give feedback to students’ work (see the paragraph: 3.3). Moreover, the student has the right to submit an appeal *via* the Department of Admissions and Registration, in case of his objection about a certain grade assigned to him, where the Head of the Department (HoD) forms a special committee -not including the course instructor- to re-evaluate the student's paper, and if it became apparent that he deserves more than the grade granted to him, his grade and results will be adjusted. During the interviews, some students indicated that their grades had been modified, as a result of them submitting a formal appeal. The assessment policy also requires giving feedback to the student to assist him/her in developing his/her academic level. Through the course files provided to the Panel during the field visit, and from interviews with faculty, students and the programme's managers, the Panel found that the programme follow clear and appropriate mechanisms to provide students with feedback. The Panel was also ensured that students and faculty members are aware of the procedures and policies related to the evaluation process, which are available on the university's website and in the student's handbook. Moreover, faculty members

are informed about any changes in the university's policy, concerning the assessments, through the department meetings and the university administration's directives. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies to assess the students' achievements, which are suitable for the Bachelor programme in Arabic Language and Literature, and that the faculty members and the students are aware of them. However, the Panel noted the lack of evidence on complying with the implementation of the University's policy related to verifying academic plagiarism in all students' work. Thus, the Panel urges the college to ensure applying the University's policies and procedures related to verifying academic plagiarism in the programme properly (see paragraph: 3.3).

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

- There is a clear academic plan that clarifies appropriate educational objectives for the programme in line with the mission of the College of Arts and the University of Bahrain.
- The curriculum of the programme is organized in a proper manner allowing progress across semesters and courses, achieving a balance between knowledge and skills, theory and practice, as well as, ensuring suitable workloads for the students.
- There are different teaching and learning methods followed by the programme, which are appropriate to the nature of the programme and contribute to achieving its intended learning outcomes.
- There are clear policies to assess students' achievements, which are suitable for the Bachelor programme in Arabic Language and Literature, and that the faculty members and the students are aware of them.

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

- Review and revise the content of courses 'Language Skills (1)' (ARAB110), and 'Language Skills (2)' (ARAB210), to ensure that their syllabi are appropriate in terms of depth and breadth
- Review the courses specification and the content of their files, in order to ensure that they are accurate and include all required information
- Rewrite the intended learning outcomes of the programme to be measurable, and ensure that all the programme's documents contain the list of outcomes that are approved by it
- Apply the procedures that contribute to using the e-learning properly and in line with the teaching and learning policy of the University and measure its effectiveness in achieving the intended learning outcomes of the programme.

1.10 Judgement

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

2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 2.1 UoB has a clear admission policy for the bachelor programmes published on the university website, and requiring that the applicant must have a secondary school certificate or its equivalent, with a minimum passing score of (70%); must have obtained their school certificate within a maximum period of two years at the time of application; and must pass an interview conducted by the University, in addition to passing a general aptitude test. Applicants who have scored (90%) or above in their secondary school certificate, or having (500) in TOFEL, or (5.5) in IELTS are exempted from the foundation programme of English. While students, who have scored between (89.9%-80%) in high school, are required to sit for an exemption test for the foundation programme. It was revealed for the Panel that the stakeholders are aware of the admission policies in the programme, and the senior managers confirmed that the distribution of students across different colleges of the university is implemented centrally according to their desires and performance based on the admission criteria. They also emphasized that the general aptitude test is an example of one of the improvements in the student distribution criteria, which has been adopted and applied by the University. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a clear admission policy, published at the university level, and known to all stakeholders. The Panel noted, however, that the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies does not participate in identifying the profile of students who are admitted to the programme. It also observed that the admission requirements have not been benchmarked with their equivalent in other programmes. The Panel urges the college to address this matter.
- 2.2 The provided evidence indicates that the profiles of students admitted to the programme are consistent with the admission criteria at the university level (as indicated in the paragraph: 2.1). Furthermore, the Panel observed through meeting a group of students that they have the necessary mental abilities and knowledge skills needed to understand the programme's courses. Additionally, the interviewed students indicated that the foundation programme contributes to developing their skills in English language. However, the presented statistics show that the length of the actual study period is not aligned with the study plan of the programme which expands to (4) years. The Panel recognizes that the lack of the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies' participation in identifying the admission requirements, as well as, the specifications of the admitted students, may lead to inconsistency within the attributes of the admitted students. Hence, the Panel urges the College to study the reasons behind the long study period in the programme (see

the paragraph: 3.8), and advises to develop a mechanism to involve the Department in the process of identifying the attributes of the admitted students.

- 2.3 According to the SER, there is an appropriate organizational structure to manage the programme, as the responsibility of the daily running of the programme is assigned to its coordinator, who follows the head of the Arabic and Islamic Studies Department in the administrative hierarchy, and who in turn follows the Dean of the College of Arts. There are several committees at the department level, such as the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), the Scientific Research Committee, the Programmes Committee, the Employment and Contracts Renewal Committee, the Cultural Committee, the Academic Promotions Committee, the Examinations Committee and the Textbooks Committee. These committees are responsible for various tasks of running the academic affairs of the programme and submitting their recommendations to the Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally to the University Council upon request. In addition to that, the coordinators of courses ensure the quality and consistency of what is taught in the multi-section courses. The programme's coordinator has a constant communication with the HoD, advisory councils, sub-committees, and others, to facilitate the implementation of the administrative system followed by the academic programmes at the University. There is a clear description of responsibilities and duties, as confirmed by the Panel during interviews conducted at the site visit, which the staff and students are aware of. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a clear and appropriate organizational structure for the programme management, with which the staff and students are familiar.
- 2.4 There are (18) academic members contributing to the delivery of the Bachelor programme in Arabic Language and literature, and at the time of the site visit, the number of the enrolled students was (476). Faculty members also contribute to teaching other programmes in the Department, in addition to courses of Arabic Language taught in other programmes offered by the UoB and its various colleges, which increases the teaching load of the faculty members beyond what stated in the university policy. This may often lead to having the faculty members teach courses outside their specific specialization. The SER indicates that the Department sometimes contracts with some part-time professors, in order to address the shortage while preparing the timetables. Currently the Department seeks to hold contracts with new faculty members who have various specializations in grammar and literature, and have expertise in scientific research, for the purpose of developing the scientific research system, as well as, updating and improving the courses. The Panel observed the availability of faculty members in the required specializations of the programme, with the exception of the (language styles) specialization. Furthermore, the College has held a contract in 2016 with a specialist, who is a professor in this field in order to compensate for this shortage. During interviews, the Panel learned that the

Department had a plan to recruit faculty members, including professors and associate professors, either through contracting which is the usual system or through the system of 'visiting professors' who have experience and excellence, to encourage scientific research. However, no formal evidence was provided to the Panel in this regard. The Panel also noted the high teaching load of faculty members, which reduces the available time for them to carry out other activities such as scientific research, which is considered an essential requirement to keep up with any updates in their specialization, as well as for employment progress, and promotion. Furthermore, the lack of an adequate number of faculty members who hold high ranks often leads to assigning the assistant professors leadership roles, which reflects negatively on their research activities, and results in unavailability of sufficient number of mentors and advisors for the junior academic staff. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should expedite developing and implementing a formal plan for recruiting new expert faculty members, and reduce the actual teaching load assigned to each academic member.

- 2.5 The UoB has procedures for recruitment, appraisal, and promotion, which are approved, published, and transparently applied in the programme, and the faculty members are aware of them. The recruitment processes follow specific procedures beginning with advertising job vacancies on the university's website, then studying applications forwarded by the Department to the College, and then to the University. Comparison is done between candidates, and the selected faculty member is then appointed according to vacant posts. Faculty members, interviewed by the Panel during the site visit, confirmed that recruitment procedures are carried out in a consistent transparent manner. The SER indicates that Article: (5) in the third chapter of the Faculty Members Regulations organizes their recruitment requirements. During its meeting with the university managers, the college managers and some faculty members, the Panel found that the University is in the process of contracting with some academic members specialized in disciplines that are rare in the Department according to the updated courses. The University is also inviting, for one semester or more, professors who have expertise in scientific supervision, teaching, and who have distinguished research output, and designated as 'visiting professors'. The Panel urges the College to expedite the implementation of this matter. There is also a form to evaluate the performance of the faculty member, which is filled up electronically and regularly by the students. The HoD also evaluate faculty members based on several aspects: the academic activity, the teaching performance, faculty members' relationships with their colleagues, their cooperation with the HoD, as well as their research and scientific activity, alongside services provided by them to the University and the community. The Panel appreciates that there are clear transparent procedures relating to the recruitment process, and the performance evaluation of the faculty members. Moreover, through the provided evidence and interviews with faculty members, the Panel observed that -in general- there is an appropriate retention rate

among faculty members, and faculty members have often terminate their work in the University due to their desire for retirement, or the expiration of the contract. The University also adopts a system for academic promotions to promote its academic members, which includes standards for forming committees of academic promotion at the department, college, and university levels, as well as, operational mechanisms for these committees, and requirements and standards for the academic promotion. During interviews conducted with faculty members, the Panel found that during the last three years, none of the academic members applied for promotion due to increased workloads assigned to them. Moreover, interviews with faculty members demonstrated lack of satisfaction towards the promotions arrangements of the Department in regard to the inconsistency of its timeline with the procedures adopted by the University. In addition, faculty members interviewed by the Panel during the site visit indicated that their research are written in Arabic language and published in Arabic journals and periodicals that are not indexed in (SCOPUS), which hinders their fulfillment of the promotion requirements in relation to publishing in scientific refereed journals and periodicals approved by the University. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement an appropriate plan to assist its faculty members to be promoted academically. In regard to introducing the new academic staff to the University, its system, services, and resources, the Panel was informed during interviews with faculty members that this activity is implemented at the department and college levels but in an informal manner. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should organize a formal induction programme for new academic staff at the department, college, and university levels; to introduce them to the university's policies, regulations, resources, and various services, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the induction programme.

- 2.6 The UoB has a number of up to date systems of information, which are in place, such as: online registration system, academic advising, timetables, and human resources. These systems are compatible with the programme aims and type. During the site visit and from the provided evidence, it became clear to the Panel that the academic and administrative staff have online access to information regarding salary slips, attendance reports, registers of students enrolled in the programme, overtime hours of administrative staff, and other needs of administrative and academic staff. These online services are also available for the students to register their courses, pay tuition, obtain their timetables, and name of the academic advisor assigned for each student. In addition to that, interviews with faculty members revealed the availability of system features that allow recording absence and monitoring students' grades online but not sending academic warning to students by email. The E-learning Centre provides reports about the utilization of its services by the academic departments. The library also provides reports about available resources and its utilization by the College. Despite the availability of an Information Management System (MIS), that is aligned with the programme objectives and type, and used in the management of the

programme, students, and various resources, the Panel found no evidence of using the MIS holistically and strategically to enhance the decision-making process. Thus, the Panel appreciates that there is an MIS that is suitable for the programme objective and needs. The Panel advises the College to further utilize the MIS in order to improve the decision-making process at the strategic level of the programme.

- 2.7 The Information Technology Centre (ITC) in UoB has formal policies and procedures that are in place, to ensure security and safety of all records and information of the students in the University, in addition to policies and procedures of risk management. There is an information server at the university campus, as well as another one outside the University, with replicas of data and information stored on the main server, to ensure that it is not damaged for any reason. Moreover, to ensure confidentiality and safety of data, access to students' data is only allowed to authorized people according to specific procedures. There is also a system of graded authorization to allow each faculty member to receive his students' data. In regard to the process of grades entry, it is assigned to the course instructor only, and approved by the HoD. It can also be modified formally - if required - and after the approval of the HoD and the Dean. Moreover, faculty members confirmed that the Department keeps records of the examination papers, student grades, and answer papers in specific places for at least a year. The Panel appreciates that policies and procedures are applied in the programme to ensure the integrity of information related to the students of the programme and maintain its security and accuracy.
- 2.8 During the site visit, the Panel had a tour in the University and the College, through which the Panel learned that the College of Arts buildings include an adequate number of classrooms, each of them accommodating (40-50) students and are equipped with computers and projectors that are necessary to present the scientific materials, in addition to a number of multi-purpose halls accommodating more than (100) students. Moreover, the University provides places for the students inside the campus such as sports halls, besides many other places available for students to practice their activities (e.g. the club of arts and music, theater, chess, media, cinema, gym, wellness centre, and offices for the students' council). Alongside the available (Wi-Fi) service at the laboratories, the College of Arts, and at the campus in general, the university provides email services to students and faculty members. The University also provides sufficient number of individual offices for the academic staff, equipped with computers, and adequate for work and meeting students, and there are offices for part-time faculty members. Moreover, there are online systems (Blackboard & Moodle) provided by Zain E-learning Centre to enable instructors to present some parts of their courses online, despite the fact that the use of these systems is limited in the programme. In addition, there are general laboratories including an adequate number of computers for students' use. However, the Panel considers that it is important to provide an audio laboratory, to be used by the students of the programme

in learning phonetics, and in the course 'language skills (1)' (ARAB 110), where they are required to identify the nature of pronunciation of the Arabic word's letters. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a specialized laboratory for audios to meet the needs of the programme and its courses. During the inspection tour at the library, it was revealed the availability of textbooks, references, and adequate electronic resources that serve the students and faculty, as well as online databases, which are adequate and up to date. Furthermore, there are study rooms, support services, and group study rooms in the library; there is also a special well-equipped room for the visually impaired. During interviews, the students and the staff expressed their satisfaction with the available facilities and services that support the programme. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs, in addition to providing resources and references, whether in hard copies or soft copies, to meet the needs of both students and faculty members.

- 2.9 The UoB has a tracking system to track the use of different resources, the Panel observed during the site visit that the timetables for the use of classrooms and laboratories are generated by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and posted at the door, and any request to change these timetables is carried out by the Deanship. Moreover, Zain E-learning Centre provides a platform for the e-learning courses incorporated within the e-learning system, where the system collects data about the use of its resources and generates various reports on the size and forms of use. Moreover, the library has a rigorous system to monitor and track its operations. In addition, computer laboratories at the college level provide registers to track their use in the educational and research process. The Panel also learned, during the site visit interviews, that it is possible to generate reports considered important by the Department and the College in regard to the students, and their academic affairs, as well as, reports about the programme usage of the provided services. The presented evidence and interviews conducted during the site visit indicate the actual use of these services, but with inconsistent ratios, as the e-learning platform is used by the programme in a very limited manner, while there is an adequate use by students and faculty members for the services available in the library. The Panel acknowledges that there are tracking systems to evaluate the utilization of different resources, but no evidence was provided on using reports of these systems by the programme managers to inform the decision-making process regularly and periodically. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should further utilize the tracking reports and the updated data of the tracking systems to enhance making decisions that contribute to increasing the effectiveness of the educational process.
- 2.10 The UoB has several administrative bodies of supportive nature serving the academic process, and they all work to provide students with support, and facilitate their learning process. During the site visit and from the provided evidence, the Panel was informed that there is appropriate support available for the students including

laboratories, library, and e-learning, whether through the infrastructure, the available computer applications or the interpersonal support such as that provided by laboratory technicians and specialists in the library. As for academic advising, there is a system to assist students in choosing appropriate subjects for them. There is also a handbook for the students with special-needs, who are provided with several supports such as: helping them in course registration, providing them with equipped car, as well as support services provided by volunteer students. The library also provides its services for these students through allocating a special room for the visually impaired that contains a computer specially equipped for them. The Career Guidance Office of the Vice President for Community and Graduate Services prepares the students for the challenges of the labour market by providing them with several services such as: the Career Day, CV pickup and delivery service, nomination and employment service at the university campus. Moreover, the Department of Advice and Guidance of the Deanship of Student Affairs provides guidance and advice to students through specialized social workers. It was revealed during interviews with students, that students are satisfied with different support services provided to them. The Panel reviewed students' exit-surveys, which are used to measure their satisfaction, and it was noted the insufficient evidence referring to the use of these surveys in improving the quality of the support services provided to students. The Panel appreciates that there are various support services provided by the University to the students. The Panel also urges the University to expand the measurement of satisfaction about these services so as to include students from all years of undergraduate study, and to implement these surveys periodically and regularly, and to utilize their results in improving the available support to the programme (see paragraph: 4.8).

- 2.11 The SER states that the University implements an induction programme for the newly enrolled students, which is organized by the Deanship of Students Affairs. During the Induction Day, students are prepared to be integrated in the university life. They are also provided with the required information about the University, as well as, with a handbook about the rights and duties of the UoB's students. The College of Arts participates in the Induction Day, through explaining the programme and its requirements for the newly admitted students, in addition to providing them with a booklet about the College of Arts. During interviews, the faculty members indicated that all introductory information about the programme are available on the website for any student who could not attend the Induction Day. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Induction Day, they also emphasized the importance of this day in forming new relationships with their peers, as well as, with students within the College and students from other colleges. They also acknowledged receiving a set of documents including: the induction programme, the student handbook, student's rights & duties, regulations of misconduct, and regulations of clothing specifications. However, the Panel was not provided with any evidence indicating that those in charge of the induction programme had measured

the satisfaction of the students with it. The Panel appreciates the arrangements taken by the university administration to introduce the newly admitted student to the programme and the provided services and activities. The Panel advises the College to track systematically the new students' satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Induction Day and to utilize the results in improving the induction programme for the new students.

- 2.12 The UoB has a detailed Academic Advising System, which states that the HoD should appoint an academic advisor for each enrolled student, and inform the Deanship of Admission and Registration, who then adds the academic advisor's name on the student's electronic page. The academic advisor works according to a stated policy, as he/she submits an annual report to the HoD about the core problems, which is presented to the Department Council and then to University Council, upon request. The Academic Advising System is supposed to monitor the problems of at-risk students who received an academic warning. A student subjected to an academic warning is not allowed to register in any course without conferring with his academic advisor and receive the appropriate advice that would enable him/her to increase his/her Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Furthermore, he/she is not allowed to register for more than (12) credit hours, in order to ensure that the study workload is suitable for him/her. It was also revealed to the Panel that there are various academic supports available for the students who are poor in English *via* the National Geographic Centre for Learning Resources, which was opened recently. In addition, support is provided through the programme of Peer Teaching, which is offered, each semester, by the Development and Training Unit. However, no evidence was presented to the Panel revealing the extent to which students have gained benefit from these mechanisms; additionally, the provided statistics indicate the long period stayed by the students to complete the graduation requirements of the programme. Furthermore, the results of the students' exit-surveys showed that only (23.8%) of the students indicated that they have received an appropriate academic advising during their study. Accordingly, the Panel acknowledges that there are mechanisms for academic advising and tracking students. The Panel also advises the College to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and their contribution to improving the academic performance of the student.
- 2.13 The UoB provides various opportunities to expand the knowledge and experience of the students, through supporting activities, including: participation in the student activities in cooperation with the college associations and clubs, and student exhibitions. During the site visit interviews, it became clear to the Panel that students are allowed to participate in a wide range of informal learning activities organized by different entities at the University. These activities include cultural and social activities, sports events, seminars, various workshops, the Career Day, and the Peer-Teaching programme. During the site visit interviews, students expressed their

satisfaction with the opportunities provided by the University and the College to expand the scope of their learning, which reflect positively on the achievement of the programme objectives. The Panel appreciates that there is a learning environment in the University contributing to expanding the students' knowledge and experience, which supports informal learning activities.

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

- There is a clear organizational structure that is adequate for the programme management, and familiar to the students and the staff.
- There are transparent clear procedures related to the process of recruitment and appraisal of faculty members.
- There is a management information system which is appropriate to the needs and objectives of the programme.
- The applied policies and procedures of the programme are appropriate to ensure the integrity of information related to the students of the programme, and maintain its security and accuracy.
- The available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs; in addition, resources and references, whether in hard copies or soft copies, are provided and meet the needs of both students and faculty members.
- There are various support services provided by the University to the students.
- There are arrangements taken by the university administration to introduce the new students to the programme, its services, and the provided activities.
- There is a learning environment in the University contributing to expanding knowledge and experience of the students, which supports the informal learning process.

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

- expedite the development and the implementation of a formal plan to recruit new expert academic members, and reduce the actual teaching workload assigned to each academic member
- develop and implement an appropriate plan to assist faculty members to achieve academic promotion
- organize a formal induction programme for the new academic staff on the level of the department, college, and the university to introduce them to the university policies, regulations, resources, and its multiple services, and evaluate the effectiveness of this programme
- expand the use of the tracking reports and the data generated by the tracking systems to enhance making decisions that contribute to upgrading the educational process efficiency.

2.16 Judgement

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

3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 3.1 At the university level, there are general attributes for the graduates developed in the form of UILOs including: communication skills, information technology skills, analytical and critical thinking skills, professional & moral responsibility, and continuing self-learning. As per the SER, there are PILOs, through which the attributes of the graduates are achieved, and these PILOs have been mapped to the UILOs. Furthermore, the Panel noted from its interviews with the students, faculty members, and employers during the site visit, that there is a common understanding for what is expected from the programme, and the outcomes that it seeks to achieve. Nevertheless and as mentioned previously (see paragraph: 1.4), there is more than one categorization for the PILOs. In addition, these outcomes are written as objectives that are difficult to be measured. The programme also uses the course assessment form to measure the achievement of ILOs. However, the Panel observed, through interviews and evidence submitted, that the implementation of this mechanism in the programme is still limited (see paragraph: 3.4) and that the programme does not integrally apply the University System of Examinations Moderation and Students Assessment, as detailed in the following paragraphs (see paragraphs: 3.5, and 3.6). The Panel urges the College to expedite addressing this matter.
- 3.2 Through the SER, the Panel found that there are specific policies and procedures for both the internal and external benchmarking, to identify to what extent the academic standards of the programme are compatible with those of equivalent programmes, where this benchmarking process includes: the aim of benchmarking, managing the benchmarking process, and managing the use of the results. The SER states that the programme has been benchmarked with a number of similar programmes offered by some regional universities based on the available information on the websites of these universities. Moreover, the programme managers explained that these benchmarking practices have been implemented informally, because implementation of formal benchmarking requires the University to sign agreements or memoranda of understanding with the universities that it intends to conduct benchmarking with, which may require long procedures, as formal arrangements require the approval of the University Council. During the site visit meetings with the faculty members, the Panel found that these informal benchmarking practices have focused mainly on comparing the number of credit hours required by the programme, the course contents and their distribution across the semester. However, the benchmarking has not included the review of the academic standards, the ILOs, and the graduate attributes, nor has it covered the admission requirements or the learning resources used in the programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct formal

benchmarking processes based on the university policy in order to cover all aspects of the programme, including the admission requirements, the academic standards of students and graduates of the programme, and utilize these results in improving the programme.

3.3 The SER states that the programme adopts a rigorous policy and clear assessment procedures based on the assessment strategy adopted by the University, in order to ensure fairness and transparency of the granted grades and the moderation of assessments in different courses of the programme. This strategy is available for all UoB stakeholders *via* its website, and in the document of study and examinations guide. The student guidebook includes general policies of assessment, and during interviews, students confirmed that they are aware of the assessment methods and new approaches, if any, through the specification form of courses distributed and discussed with them by the course instructor at the beginning of each academic semester. Results of assessments and students work are posted for the students to see prior to the final examinations. Upon examining the course files, it was confirmed to the Panel the inclusion of information about the assessment methods used and the distribution of grades over the semester examinations, assignments, projects and research papers, and the course final examinations. Furthermore, the Panel was informed during interviews that the QAAC at the University and the Quality Assurance Office (QAO) at the College conduct internal moderation for the course files periodically to ensure that the utilized assessment tools are compatible with the learning outcomes intended to be achieved, and they provide the programme with recommendations for improvement. The evidence provided to the Panel indicates that the Department has established an internal committee to review examinations on 20 September 2016, while the resolution of establishing this committee has identified its members, it did not identify its terms of reference, responsibilities, or the frequency of its meetings. The minutes of its meetings indicate that the nature of the committee's work is purely administrative, as it is responsible for the submission of the final examination papers by the faculty members on time, the allocation of examination observers, and ensuring smooth running of the examination process. The Panel appreciates that the assessment tools stated in the courses specification are continually applied and students are aware of them. However, the Panel observed that the university plagiarism policy is not implemented in all student works. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the university policies and procedures of plagiarism are applied properly in the programme. The Panel also observed that the System of Examinations Moderation and Students Assessment is not applied comprehensively in the programme, and urges the College to address this matter (see paragraphs: 3.5 and 3.6).

3.4 The institutional assessment policies and procedures stated in the System of Study and Examinations of UoB, as well as, in the Moderation Policy of Examinations and

Assessment stipulate that the assessments should be appropriate to the assessed ILOs. The SER indicates that the total score obtained by the student in a certain course, is divided over the results of the examinations taken and his/her assessed works including homework, assignments, and different activities, where the course instructor has mapped the assessment tools with specific learning outcomes of the course that are intended to be measured. After the assessment of the student works at the end of the semester, the course assessment form is used to assess the achievement of the ILOs. However, during its meeting with the faculty members and by examining the course files, the Panel was informed that the programme has only applied this mechanism recently, and the faculty member have a limited knowledge about it, in addition to applying it only on a certain sample of courses. Furthermore, the Panel was informed that the faculty members have attended a workshop about measurement of the learning outcomes, but they still need further training to enable them to achieve that. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct intensive training courses about the assessment procedures and their alignment with the learning outcomes according to the Study and Examination System in UoB, and consequently expedite the implementation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of the CILOs achievement, and finally the achievement of the PILOs in a more rigorous manner.

- 3.5 The UoB has a system of internal moderation in relation to developing assessment tools for students' achievement and granting grades, for all academic programmes in all colleges in general. Both of the Study and Examinations System of UoB, and the Assessment and Moderation Policy, states that there are mechanisms to verify the moderation of assessments, examinations, and grading in order to ensure compatibility and fairness of these processes. During the site visit interviews, the Panel found that in regard to multi-section courses, the coordinators of these courses are responsible for supervising the setting of the examination questions, correcting the students papers and grading, in order to ensure the achievement of fairness and transparency. As for single courses, the course instructor is entirely responsible for preparing the examination paper, correcting the student works and monitoring their grades. The SER states that the Department relies on the Examinations Committee in the Department, as well as, the QAC, and the QAO of the College to ensure fairness of the assessments. However, minutes of the Examinations Committee indicate that the role of this committee is rather superficial, and limited only to administrative tasks, and does not include verification of the examination questions to ensure whether they are appropriate to the level and content of the course as well as its ILOs or not. Furthermore, no evidence was provided to the Panel indicating that this committee has conducted any process to verify the moderation and fairness of the assessed examination papers. The programme managers mentioned that the QAAC at the University and the QAO at the College have conducted post-moderation for the examination papers, and for the student works. However, this matter has not been

conducted by specialists nor in a regular manner. Moreover, interviewed faculty members indicated during the site visit that they rely on their professional relations to ensure that the tools used in assessment and measurement are compatible with those learning outcomes that are expected to be measured, and that the granted grades are appropriate to the students' achievement, and that this process is implemented informally among the faculty members. They also indicated that the programme coordinator has a fundamental role in cooperation with the course instructor to ensure the alignment of the assessment questions to the knowledge and skills expected to be measured, and that this is done before conducting the assessment. The Panel observed that there are policies for pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools, and that the programme has limited experiences in applying them, despite being applied in an informal manner. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should activate the university arrangements related to pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools used in the programme, and that it should assess their effectiveness, and that the moderators should be specialists.

- 3.6 The UoB has a moderation policy for examinations and students assessment, which was approved by the University Council in 2015, and includes: the requirements of the internal and external moderations and mechanisms of pre and post moderations for examinations. Article (9) of the regulation related to the moderation of examinations and assessment of students requires 'external verification of the examinations and moderation of students' performance in assessment...in the academic programmes at the undergraduate level and the postgraduate level'. There is also an evidence related to an issued resolution concerning the use of external moderators, however, this resolution has not been activated yet. Furthermore, some faculty members indicated that they have participated personally in moderating works with other peers from similar universities, where this participation enabled them to discover many aspects of improvement that should be included in the course's syllabus, as well as, in the assessment tools and methods used in them. However, this effort is still considered as personal and informal matter, and the Panel was confirmed from the provided evidence and interviews with faculty members that there are no formal procedures for external moderation of assessment applied in the courses of the Bachelor programme of Arabic Language and Literature. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of the assessment, where the feedback of the external moderation contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses.
- 3.7 The Panel examined the course files throughout different levels including: course specifications, examination papers, grade sheets, samples of students work, and the graduation projects, and it was revealed that there are a number of courses where the student works and the granted grades are compatible with the course's level and content. However, the Panel found that the levels of examinations provided to the

students are inconsistent, where some of the examination questions measure low levels of knowledge that are not appropriate to the Bachelor programme's level such as in the two courses 'Language Skills (1)' (ARAB110), and 'Language Skills (2)' (ARAB210). The Panel has also found that the academic standards of the assessment tools and the granted grades are not comparable with what is expected in similar programmes. The Panel attributes this to the lack of a clear approach, through which the assessment tools and all students' coursework during the semester are subjected to moderation, in order to ensure that the level of their works and scores are aligned with what is agreed upon in other similar programmes of Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature. Hence, the Panel urges the College to ensure that the mechanisms of the System of Examinations Moderation and Students Assessment are applied comprehensively in the programme in order to ensure that the students' works are appropriate to the programme type and scientific degree (see the paragraphs: 3.4 and 3.6).

- 3.8 The programme measures the graduates' level of achievement in direct and indirect ways. As for the direct way, it is conducted through the courses assessment form, which is used in measuring the PILOs achievement. However, this mechanism is not applied in all courses, as the inaccuracy of the ILOs and the non-measurable way in which they were written, whether at the programme level or in a number of courses, limit the ability to adopt this method currently for the purpose of ensuring the level of graduates achievement (see paragraph: 3.4). The CGPA table incorporated in the SER shows that 87 of the programme graduates (16%) had graduated with 'Excellent' scores, while (25%) of graduates had 'Very Good', (35%) 'Good' and (24%) had 'Pass' scores in the academic years 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. The Panel recognizes that the distribution of the CGPAs of the programme's graduates is acceptable, though it tends to lean, to some extent, towards higher grades. In addition to that, the faculty members indicated that the ability of students to conduct good research through the capstone project course (ARAB488) is considered as an indicator that the level of graduates' achievement is compatible with the programme outcomes. However, the lack of external examiners for the Department to evaluate the actual level of students limits this expectation. As for the indirect method of measuring graduates' achievement, this is done by measuring the satisfaction of alumni and employers with the programme and its outcomes, as there are two different surveys, one for the employers and the other for the alumni. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence referring to the distribution of these surveys regularly and periodically. The SER includes the results of the feedback from the employers, as the sample is formed of (5) individuals only. These results show lack of an appropriate level of satisfaction of the employers in a number of the expected outcomes of the programme such as: 'developing the sense of language, literature, and criticism, and reading ability of the student', and 'preparing the students to pursue postgraduate studies in the field of specialization'. Moreover, employers had a low level of satisfaction toward 'the analytical and critical

thinking skills of graduates of the programme', which raises a concern. Based on the above, the Panel observed that there are direct and indirect mechanisms to verify the alignment of the graduates' achievement with the objectives and outcomes of the programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should apply these mechanisms in the Bachelor programme of Arabic Language and Literature regularly, and measure the effectiveness of the applied mechanisms in verifying the actual level of the graduates' achievement and its fulfillment of the programme's objectives, and its learning outcomes.

- 3.9 The SER of the programme offered limited statistics about the analysis of cohorts for the academic years from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016. The statistics show that the number of admitted students to the programme is fluctuating but under an acceptable curve. According to the provided statistics in the SER, the programme has graduated in the academic years (from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016) (87) students. The provided data about graduates indicate that there about (50%) of graduates turn to work in jobs related to their specialization, while only (1%) of them pursued their postgraduate studies. Furthermore, the Panel observed the length of time that student spent to finish his/her graduation requirements, although the study plan distributes the programme courses over (4) years. The provided statistics demonstrate that only (30%) of the students completed the graduation requirements within this period, while (30%) spent (4.5) years to finish the programme, (22%) spent (5) years, and (17%) spent (5.5) years or more. Additionally, the Panel was not provided with any statistics about students withdrawal rates or the progress rates. The Panel recognizes that there is a general lack of systematic approach in analyzing data of the student cohorts, which was confirmed during interviews with the programme team and faculty members. Although the Department of Registration and Admission has statistics about the admitted cohorts of the programme, the Panel was not provided with any evidence indicating that the College has analyzed these statistics or utilized their results in developing the programme. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts, in conducting a detailed analysis about the academic cohorts and utilize its result in improving the programme.
- 3.10 The study plan of the programme includes a compulsory capstone project course (ARAB488), with (3) credit hours, which is allocated in the last semester of the study plan. This course provides the student with an opportunity to apply knowledge and theories obtained through studying previous courses. It aims to help the students to master the basic competencies and skills of research, choose the appropriate approach to study a specific research problem, explain the research findings, and write specialized research papers. These aims are mapped to the (19) ILOs of the courses, and linked to the PILOs. The Panel urges the college to review these outcomes and the mapping matrix, in the light of what was mentioned in paragraphs (1.4) and (1.5). In addition to that, there are clear arrangements to manage the course, which are known

to all students and faculty members, as confirmed by the Panel. These arrangements include the following steps: registering in the course, selecting a supervisor, providing students with some formative lectures, meetings with the instructor for advising and guidance, providing the student with observations, reviewing the research, and tracking the student's work by the supervisor. These steps are followed by selecting an internal examiner from the Department to review the research, discussing the research with the student in the presence of his supervisor, and keeping the research's grade in a specific form. Interviewed students and graduates of the programme confirmed their satisfaction with this course, the follow-up process, the provided support, and the academic advices provided by the supervisor. The faculty members indicated that the capstone project provides an opportunity to judge the capabilities and attributes of the student in a direct manner, which allows for the development of these capabilities and enable the student to acquire the required attributes for graduation. The Panel reviewed a sample of the students' research, and found that the presented projects are of an appropriate level, and that the assessment process is implemented in a fair and transparent manner. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate procedures that are followed to manage the capstone projects, and that both the faculty and the students are aware of them, however, the Panel advises the College to involve an external examiner from outside the Department and the University to support the assessment process.

- 3.11 The SER clarifies that the Department of Arabic language and Islamic Studies has recently formulated an advisory committee for the programme, to provide consultations in regard to the Bachelor programme. It consists of (6) employers, and the programme's alumni who work in jobs related to the programme in the Ministry of Education, the Civil Service Bureau, the Ministry of the Affairs of the Consultative Council and the Chamber of Deputies. The Panel was informed during meeting with the members of this committee that the committee has not held any formal meeting until the date of the site visit, and that its members offer advice and proposals for the Department informally *via* phone calls or through individual meetings. The Panel found that the advisory committee includes an elite group of employers in the field of Arabic language and literature, who are able to enrich the programme with observations about the needs of the labour market. They indicated that there is a need in the labour market for the provision of several courses in Arabic calligraphy proficiency, and in the basic principles of traditional and generative grammars as well as rhetoric lessons; due to their importance in correcting the language of letters and correspondences addressed to and from the institutions of the kingdom of Bahrain. In addition, there is an advisory committee of students that was established by selecting (6) students from different academic years according to their academic performance and grades. During the Panel's meeting with them, they praised the programme managers for accepting their opinions about the programme development. The Panel recognizes that there is an advisory committee consisting of employers and alumni of

the programme. The Panel, however, recommends that the College should activate the role of this committee, follow a clear methodology, and identify topics that are presented to and reviewed by the committee, in addition to a mechanism of addressing observations presented by this committee to the programme.

3.12 The programme measures the satisfaction level of employers and alumni by using questionnaires that are designed for this purpose. The SER includes the results of the employers' survey and the students' exit-survey. The supporting evidence provided to the Panel show that only (5) employers, and (122) senior students responded to these surveys. These results refer to a general satisfaction with the programme, (75%) of the employers' survey, and (85%) of the students' exit-survey respondents. However, the detailed responses of the employers raise a concern, especially in regard to the programme's ability to develop 'the student's sense of language, literature, criticism, and reading', and 'prepare the student to pursue postgraduate studies in the field of specialization'. In addition to that, employers had a low level of satisfaction with 'the critical and analytical skills of the programme's graduates', whereas the percentage of students who agreed that the programme 'helped them to improve their communication skills with others' and 'developed their skills to work in groups', did not exceed (46.8%), and (30%) respectively. Beyond those two questionnaires, the Panel did not find any evidence indicating that the programme had measured the satisfaction of both the employers and the alumni about its level and learning outcomes. During the site visit, the Panel met a number of employers and alumni of the programme, who expressed their general satisfaction about the programme, which was observed by the Panel. However, the Panel urges the College to investigate the reasons behind the low level of satisfaction concerning some outcomes of the programme (as indicated above) whether among the employers or the senior students. The Panel also urges College to measure the satisfaction level of the alumni and employers regularly and on a wider scale within the labour market, and to utilize its results in improving the programme (see recommendation in paragraph: 4.8).

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

- There are assessment tools that are published in the courses specification, they are regularly applied and students are aware of them.
- There are appropriate actions in place to manage the capstone project course, and both the faculty members and the students are aware of them.

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

- conduct formal benchmarking processes based on the university policy in order to cover all aspects of the programme, including the admission requirements, the

academic standards of students and graduates of the programme, and utilize these results in improving the programme

- ensure that the university policies and procedures of plagiarism are applied properly in the programme
- conduct intensive training courses about the assessment procedures and their alignment with the learning outcomes according to the Study and Examination System in UoB, and consequently expedite the activation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of the CILOs achievement, and finally the achievement of the PILOs in a more rigorous manner
- activate the university arrangements related to pre and post internal moderation for the assessment tools used in the programme, and assess their effectiveness, and ensure that the moderators are specialists
- implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of the assessment, where the feedback of the external moderation contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses
- utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts, in conducting a detailed analysis about the academic cohorts and utilize its result in improving the programme
- activate the role of the advisory committee, follow an explicit methodology, identify topics presented and reviewed by the committee, and determine the mechanism of processing observations provided to the programme.

3.15 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 4.1 The UoB has institutional policies and systems, which cover different academic and administrative aspects, including: examinations, students, continuing education, community service, alumni, administrative affairs, information technology, security, safety and health, the faculty regulation, the academic promotion system, the academic advising system, the scholarship regulation, and the academic development of faculty members. In regard to the policies and systems of quality, they include: University Policy for Quality Assurance, Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy of Programmes, the Benchmarking Policy, and the System of Offering the Academic Programmes and Courses, etc. The Panel is of the view that such policies and systems meet the basic needs of the programme, and they are available on the University website to be viewed by academic staff. Furthermore, the faculty members mentioned -during interviews- that they are informed about these policies *via* several channels including, the periodic circulars issued by the university management, the College Deanship, and the HoD. Faculty members expressed their opinions about these policies through meetings of the Department Council and different committees of the Department. The SER states that the UoB ensures the implementation of these policies and regulations through the following structure: the QAAC at the university level, the QAO at the college level, and the QAC in the Department. The College Dean, the HoD and the programme coordinator are cooperating in applying these policies and systems in the programme. Moreover, the senior management of the programme stated that these policies are regularly reviewed every five years in accordance with the System of Proposing, Reviewing, and Developing Policies, and that a number of academic members participate in this review, as well as, the quality assurance directors in the University, the College, and the Department. Thus, the Panel appreciates that documented policies and institutional systems are in place, meeting the programme needs, and communicated to the faculty members. However, the Panel noted that some of these policies are not implemented appropriately such as: the Moderation Policy, the Plagiarism Policy, the Benchmarking Policy, the advisory committees and others (as mentioned in other paragraphs of this Report). The Panel urges the College to ensure the implementation of the university policies consistently at the programme level, as indicated in different paragraphs of this Report.
- 4.2 The College has an organizational structure, which is characterized by flexibility and specialized functions, to ensure the distribution of tasks in a manner that achieves a wide range of the college's aims and the relevant programmes under its supervision,

including the programme of the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature that follows the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies at the College of Arts. The programme includes several committees such as the Committee of Scientific Research, Conferences, and Academic Development, the Culture Committee, the QAC, and the Academic Promotion Committee, which usually meet according to work requirements, and report their recommendations to the HoD, who in turn takes the necessary steps, and raises those recommendations to the university administration *via* the communication channels with the Dean of the College, or takes the appropriate action within the Department. According to interviews conducted by the Panel, the academic responsibility of the programme is assigned to the HoD in collaboration with the faculty members, as well as, the programme's coordinator, and the Department Council is responsible for making decisions and recommendations in accordance with the university laws and regulations. The Deanship of the Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research in the University monitors and applies regulations and the System of the Postgraduate Studies. In addition to that there are clear lines for different responsibilities. The Guidebook of Faculty Members outlines authorities and roles of the faculty members, the Dean, and the President of the University. Hence, the Panel acknowledges that there is a responsible leadership for the effective management of the programme. However, the Panel observed that the duties of the HoD are not limited only to the academic and administrative aspects of the programme, but they include academic workload, which may impact the effectiveness of his/her leadership role in the Department and result in scattering his/her efforts between teaching on one hand and academic and administrative supervision on the other hand. The Panel advises that the College should review the teaching workload of the HoD, to ensure that it is adequate for his/her academic and administrative duties for the programme in general.

- 4.3 There are policies and procedures for the quality assurance at the university, college, and department levels, where the QAAC in the University monitors works of the quality assurance units at the colleges, while the QAO at the college -which is directly under the College Dean - monitors the Quality Assurance System in the Programmes. At the department level, there is a QAC that includes the coordinators of the programmes, and the Panel found that this committee ensures meeting the needs of the quality system related to the programme. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there are formal policies and procedures that are appropriate to the quality assurance at the university and the college levels. During interviews, the academic members indicated that they have participated in the quality assurance activities and that some improvements were applied in the programme such as introducing the course assessment form, and that the QAAC has formed a committee in 2016 to implement an academic audit for the College of Arts and its various departments. The QAAC has also provided a guide for quality policies and procedures in the academic programmes. However, this guide is published in English, so it may be difficult to be

understood and comprehended. According to the statements of the college managers during their interviews, the quality assurance unit has informally translated a number of quality assurance systems incorporated in the report. Hence, the Panel advises translating this guide into Arabic so that it can be bilingual. The Panel noted lack of consistency in applying policies, and quality assurance mechanisms in the programme, as the course assessment form was used only in few courses. Furthermore, monitoring the results of these forms is still ineffective, in addition to observations made by the Panel in different parts of this Report about the benchmarking processes, and the moderation of the assessment tools, alongside what was mentioned in the college audit report, issued in June 2016, and for which the Panel found no evidence of addressing its recommendations. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should improve the used approaches for monitoring and assessing the quality assurance management system in the programme, and measures their effectiveness.

- 4.4 As per the SER, the QAO at the College presented several training courses and workshops for faculty members, and supporting staff, in order to introduce the quality concept for them, and build their capabilities to achieve the quality requirements in the academic programmes, in addition to forming the quality culture, and enhancing the understanding of faculty members of the quality assurance system, policies and procedures adopted by the university management, the College, and the Department, as mentioned during interviews with the director of the QAAC, the director of the QAO, and faculty members. The Panel found that the number of training courses is insufficient to achieve the expected awareness and understanding by the academic members of all quality assurance issues. The Panel noted during interviews with faculty members that they have an acceptable understanding of the quality assurance requirements and their roles in ensuring the effectiveness of learning. Nevertheless, while reviewing the course, the Panel noted that the concept of quality is not effectively evident within the work of the faculty members, as the emphasis is often placed on achieving the requirements of the UoB quality system in terms of form rather than content. Thus, the Panel acknowledges that there is an acceptable understanding by the faculty members of the quality mechanisms and requirements. The Panel also notes the efforts made by the programme management to disseminate the quality culture among them, and advises the college to continue embedding this culture, to become a routine self-practice, in order to ensure a high level of achievement of the programmes content and outcomes.
- 4.5 The UoB has the ‘System of Offering and Developing Academic Programmes and Courses’, which was approved in 2013, and is available on its website. The system includes a description of how to offer and develop the academic programmes and courses, and how to stop or suspend them; there are also forms for all the functions of this system. The Panel was informed about this system, and after careful examination,

it was revealed to the Panel that this system states that developing a new programme or improving a current one should take into account the needs of the labour market, represented by public and private institutions, and professional associations benefiting from the programme outcomes, in addition to surveying opinions of the beneficiaries such as the future students and others. According to this system, a specific committee is formed at the department level to study the feasibility of delivering a new programme and to present all required documents to the department's curriculum committee. Then the HoD presents the report to the Department Council to discuss and generate a recommendation about it. After that, the curriculum committee of the Department presents the recommendation to the College Dean in order to submit it to the curriculum committee at the college level, and if it approves the recommendation, it is raised to the University Council, which in turn raises it to the curriculum committee at the University. The Panel is satisfied that there is a documented policy at the university level, which is appropriate for developing and offering academic programmes.

- 4.6 The SER indicates that the team of the Bachelor programme in Arabic Language and Literature has reviewed and improved it throughout the academic year based on a group of internal mechanisms, as the QAAC conducts periodic visits to the programme, to ensure the implementation of the quality assurance mechanisms, and verify the academic standards of the programme, which results in a comprehensive report according to which, the Department presents an improvement plan for the programme. Furthermore, the QAO in the College is responsible for monitoring what has been achieved concerning the improvement plan and the internal moderation of the course files, and generate reports. During interviews with the Panel, it was indicated that the faculty members have participated in the self-evaluation process through the committee responsible for preparing the assessment reports related to the achievement of CILOs of each course, which are subsequently used to measure the achievement of PILOs in general, while, until the date of this visit, this mechanism has not been applied to all courses of the programme. The university policies require the Department to evaluate the programme and submit an SER to the QAAC at the University. The report should include the assessment of students' achievement, the educational objectives of the programme, the utilization of the stakeholders' feedback after analyzing it, the preparation of an improvement plan and tracking its implementation. However, there was no evidence referring to conducting an annual SER for the programme regularly. Despite the availability of evidence referring to the development of the programme and its courses, the Panel observed, during interviews conducted with the faculty members and the programme team, that there was confusion between the requirements of the comprehensive periodic review and the annual continuing review of the programme. Moreover, the provided evidence and information obtained by the Panel during the site visit interviews indicate that both the Department and the College do not adopt clear documented mechanisms for the

regular annual review of the programme, in addition to the lack of evidence that refers to providing annual improvement plans for the programme. Consequently, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate arrangements and procedures at the university level, and notes the efforts of the programme managers and faculty members in improving the programme of the Bachelor of Arts in Arabic Language and Literature. The Panel advises the College to take the necessary arrangements to implement annual reviews of the programme at the department and the college levels, as well as, to enhance the mechanisms of tracking the implementation of its improvement plans.

- 4.7 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy of the Programmes in UoB states that the academic programmes should be subjected to a periodic review in order to ensure the achievement of its learning outcomes, the effectiveness of the curriculum, and the utilization of the stakeholders' feedback in the review process. According to the manual of the internal quality assurance issued by the QAAC at the University, these reviews include the programme objectives, the PILOs, the CILOs, the course specifications, the teaching methods, and the internship, in addition to reviewing the standards of the students' admission, as well as, the regulations of remedial courses. The review policy also includes surveys of students, employers, ministries, and institutions related to the programme outputs. The quality manual also indicates that the process of monitoring recommendations and decisions generated as a result of the review process is conducted by the QAAC in collaboration with the QAO at the College. The QAAC has conducted a review for the programme in 2016, and generated a report in this regard. In the light of this report, the Department submitted an improvement plan for the programme. The Panel, however, observed that this review did not cover all the programme aspects, and that feedback from the stakeholders was very limited. In addition, there was no sufficient evidence indicating that such reviews are conducted continually and regularly and the mechanisms of tracking the application of improvement plans were weak. Moreover, all members of the Panel are from the university staff without including any external element as required by the UoB policy in this regard. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should implement the university policy of periodic programme review in a holistic and continual manner, and develop mechanisms for monitoring and tracking the implementation of improvement plans.
- 4.8 As stated in the SER, the College gathers feedback from the programme stakeholders, using students' exit-surveys, course assessment forms, and course instructors' evaluations at the end of each semester, in addition to the employers and alumni surveys. The provided evidence indicates that the University has analyzed feedback from these questionnaires to identify points of strength and others that need to be improved. However, there was insufficient evidence concerning the regular collection of feedback, and the use of its results, through systematic mechanisms, to improve the programme. The SER indicates that the programme relies on feedback from the

meetings of the advisory committee consisting of employers and alumni. However, this committee has been recently established, and it has not held a meeting until the date of this visit. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should continue to develop its mechanisms of surveying all stakeholders' opinions -especially external ones- and to analyze the results periodically and regularly, in addition to informing all its internal and external stakeholders about the results.

- 4.9 The SER states that the UoB organized a programme for the purpose of developing the capabilities of faculty members, and it also developed the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership Skills to provide faculty members with professional development. The unit offers a postgraduate programme in academic practice for new faculty members and the continuous academic development programme for experienced faculty members. During interviews, the faculty members confirmed that they have benefited from these programmes, and that the unit has measured their satisfaction at the end of each activity. This is in addition to the multiple training courses, short workshops, and lectures held by the QAAC to establish the quality culture and improve the programme outcomes. Furthermore, training courses and workshops are also conducted by the Centre of Measurement, Evaluation, and Academic Development in the University, to present topics related to building aptitude tests, measurement methods as well as induction and orientation courses in various topics, in order to train faculty on how to employ the best assessment approaches for evaluating student's performance. Faculty members have participated and attended these training courses and workshops. The Panel appreciates the efforts made by the UoB to provide several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership, in order to develop the teaching and professional practices of new and senior faculty members. Nevertheless, the Panel observed that the professional development needs of faculty members -at the present time- are not identified according to a systematic organized approach, nor are they related to the formal evaluation of their performance, according to the university policy. Therefore, the Panel advises the University to base the professional development of faculty members on an analysis of their academic needs, and in the light of the annual evaluation results of their performance, and to adopt a mechanism to measure the impact of these practices on the performance of the faculty members.
- 4.10 The SER states that the College management is keen to develop the study plan of the programme, in order to be in line with the needs of the labour market, and that this is done through feedback from the employers and alumni. During the site visit interviews, faculty members indicated that they have utilized the results of these surveys in developing the research aspect, as well as, improving the skills of the students in courses. However, the nature of such surveys does not provide information about the labour market needs in the long term. Furthermore, the Panel did not find evidence about conducting comprehensive and periodic studies to scope

the labour market needs, despite their importance in developing the programme, especially in the light of the programme's limited ability to attract new students to enroll in it. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should implement periodic, comprehensive, and rigorous studies to assess the labour market needs both on the long-term and short-term, and to utilize the results in developing the programme.

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

- There are institutional documented policies and systems that are adequate for meeting the programme's needs, and are available for the faculty members.
- There are formal appropriate policies and procedures for the quality assurance at the university and the college levels.
- There are appropriate arrangements and procedures at the university level to review the academic programmes.
- The University provide several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership Skills, in order to develop the teaching and professional practices for new and senior faculty members.

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

- improve the approaches used for monitoring and assessing the quality assurance management system in the programme, and measures their effectiveness
- implement the university policy of periodic programme review in a holistic and continual manner, and develop mechanisms for monitoring and tracking the implementation of improvement plans
- continue to develop its mechanisms of surveying all stakeholders' opinions - especially external ones- and to analyze the results periodically and regularly, in addition to informing all its internal and external stakeholders about the results
- implement periodic, comprehensive, and rigorous studies to assess the labour market needs both on the long-term and short-term, and to utilize the results in developing the programme.

4.13 **Judgement**

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

5. Conclusion

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

There is a limited confidence in the Bachelor of Arts in in Arabic Language and Literature Programme offered by the University of Bahrain.