



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor in Islamic Studies

College of Arts

University of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

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Acronyms

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HoD	Head of the Department
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
ITC	Information Technology Centre
MIS	Management Information Systems
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QAO	Quality Assurance Office
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
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 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 in Islamic Studies programme 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 in Islamic Studies programme. 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 in Islamic Studies programme.

C. Overview of the College of Arts

The College of Arts, at the UoB, was originally established as a part of the University College of Science, Art and Education, which was founded in 1978. In 1986, the UoB was established by a merger of the Gulf Polytechnic and the University College of Science, Arts and Education. The Board of Trustees of the UoB issued a decision, in 1990, to separate the College of Arts & Science into two colleges: The College of Arts and the College of Science. The current vision of the College of Arts is 'to occupy its leading role in promoting the identity and the modern vision of heritage; be distinct in creating the cultural environment and stimulating scientific creativity and intellectual excellence in an atmosphere open to values of pluralism and cultural diversity through outputs that integrate graduates in development, community service and the labour market.' The College of Arts currently includes five departments, which offer undergraduate programmes of study leading to Bachelor of Arts qualifications as well as Master of Arts degrees. At the time of the site visit, the College employed 128 full-time and 69 part-time faculty members, and 29 administrative staff. The total number of enrolled students was 5719.

D. Overview of the Bachelor in Islamic Studies

The Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme is offered by the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies of the College of Arts. The admission to the undergraduate programmes of the College of Arts was under the name of 'Arts-Preparatory' without specifying the discipline until 1996. The total number of students registered in the programme was (1163), and the number of graduates from the commencement of the programme until the time of this site visit was (852). There are (23) full-time faculty members working in the Department, in addition to (8) part-time faculty members, supported by (3) administrative staff.

E. Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the BA in Islamic Studies

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 UoB has a framework for developing and assessing the academic programmes, that is explained in the University Handbook, and adopted by all UoB programmes, including the Bachelor in Islamic Studies. The programme has (5) objectives through which it seeks to prepare specialists who have moderate thinking characterized by tolerance, dialogue, women's equity, and disseminating the culture of critique instead of the culture of indoctrination. During the site visit interviews with faculty members, the Panel was informed that these objectives have been mapped to the missions of both the College and the University, as well as, to their strategic goals. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) explains this mapping process in detail. In addition to mapping the programme objectives with the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), these objectives have been properly mapped to the University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs). Moreover, the Panel observed during its meeting with the senior managers of the programme, the faculty members, and the students, that they are aware of the objectives and outcomes sought to be accomplished by the programme. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme has a clear academic plan that includes appropriate objectives for the programme's type and level, which are aligned with the mission of the College of Arts and the UoB's strategic goals.
- 1.2 The curriculum of the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme consists of a number of compulsory and elective courses with a total number of credit hours of (128) that are distributed as follows: (11) credit hours for the compulsory university requirements, (18) credit hours for the compulsory college requirements, (81) credit hours for the Major compulsory requirements and (9) for the elective courses, in addition to (9) credit hours for the Minor compulsory requirements. Based on the student's choice for the Major specialization and the Minor specialization, he/she can graduate from one of these four tracks: Religion Fundamentals (Single Track), Religion Fundamentals (Major/Minor Track), Principles of Sharia (Single Track), Principles of Sharia (Major/Minor Track). The study plan of the programme allocates the courses over (8) semesters enabling the student to complete all requirements of the programme throughout four academic years. The Panel recognizes that the allocation of courses throughout the study plan ensures an appropriate study workload, which is consistent with other similar programmes, and this was confirmed by the interviewed students during the site visit. The Panel also observed that there are (3) courses of the programme dedicated to the English language, and they are all designed for the programmes of Humanities. The study plan of the programme provides course-by-course progression starting from general foundational courses that often provide the

student with the basics of the undergraduate study requirements, to primary specialized courses, then to more advanced specialized courses of more depth, and finally to the graduation project in the last semester in the study plan. In addition, there is a list of pre-requisites to ensure that the student cannot register in any course if he/she has not covered its requirements. The Panel notes that the curriculum of the programme contains the courses required for the Bachelor degree in Islamic Studies, and it covers different fields that assist the field of specialization. Furthermore, the Islamic Studies is presented in the programme from a realist perspective, and in a context that is comparable to the need of the contemporary human reality for the Islamic values and aims, as it is considered a necessary requirement for the Department of Islamic Studies. The Panel appreciates that the programme's curriculum covers different fields that are necessary for the discipline, and it is organized in a proper manner, which allows course-by-course progression throughout the academic years, to ensure suitable study workloads for the students. However, the Panel notes that the curriculum has dropped some important subjects that are related to Islamic courses like the course of 'Reading, Recitation and Memorization'. The Panel advises the College to study the possibility of adding this course during the next periodical review. Moreover, the Panel notes that the programme's curriculum contains some courses related to the skills of theoretical work and research preparation, which ensures achieving some balance between theory and practice. However, the programme does not include a work-based learning component, and that decreases the opportunity for the students to acquire important specialized skills, which raise the level of their knowledge on one hand, and the level of their professional skills on the other hand. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should study the possibility of including an internship course for work-based learning within the curriculum, to reduce the gap between the theoretical aspects and the practical aspects in the programme. Additionally, the Panel was informed during interviews with students and graduates that the Department offers a limited number of elective courses for different reasons, which is reflected negatively in the students' ability to choose freely. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should offer an adequate number of elective courses every semester, to provide students with a real opportunity of choosing between these courses.

- 1.3 The specification of the programme's courses is documented in a standard form issued by the University Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC). The specification of each course includes: the course content and its distribution throughout the semester, its objectives, the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), a matrix mapping between the CILOs and PILOs, the teaching methods, the assessment approaches of its outcomes, and the scientific references. The SER indicates that the Department has conducted an informal benchmarking for the content of the programme's curriculum with other similar programmes offered by regional universities, and the result of this benchmarking has revealed that the Bachelor in

Islamic Studies programme offered by the UoB is similar -to a large extent- with other programmes' curricula of these institutions. By reviewing the content of some courses, the Panel found that the syllabi of these courses are compatible with the regionally and internationally agreed norms and standards of the programme's specializations and scientific degree. Additionally, the programme's content is properly documented in terms of the subject's breadth, depth, and appropriateness. Appropriate references are identified whether for professional or research purposes, and are newly published. The Panel appreciates that the courses cover the objectives and PILOs, and that the syllabi of the courses are well-documented in terms of depth, breadth and the utilized learning resources.

- 1.4 The specification of the programme includes (11) PILOs, that are mapped to the UILOs. The Panel is of the view that the PILOs are clear partially and relatively aligned with the programme's objectives and goals. However, the Panel observed that these learning outcomes are not written in a measurable way and articulated as aims rather than Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), such as in the outcome (C): 'overcome the environmental legacy and the social pressure...', and the outcome (D): 'create a belief of the Islamic thinking.'. The SER states that the PILOs have been reviewed and rewritten in order to form (6) outcomes that are measurable, and accordingly, more appropriate to the programme and its scientific level. However, these outcomes have not been clearly incorporated in the programme yet, and have not been mapped either to the UILOs or to the programme's objectives. Moreover, the courses of the programme are still mapped to the former PILOs. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should review and revise the specifications of both the programme and the courses, to ensure that they include the recent PILOs, and use these outcomes to ensure the academic standards of both the students and the graduates.
- 1.5 There is a set of CILOs for each course offered by the programme of Bachelor in Islamic Studies, which are documented in the course specification. The SER indicates that these outcomes are subject to a continuing review by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, and the Quality Assurance Office (QAO) of the College of Arts, and the University QAAC. The last review was conducted by the QAAC in the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017, to ensure that these outcomes reflect the level of knowledge attainment properly, and contribute effectively in accomplishing the PILOs. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that the programme's managers are in the process of reviewing the CILOs and determining their levels based on the level descriptors of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Panel urges the College to expedite reviewing the CILOs. In addition to that, the SER refers to the mapping of the courses to the PILOs, however, the Panel noticed that this mapping has been conducted with the former PILOs, which are non-measurable, and the course specifications still include these outcomes. The Panel urges the College to update the

course specifications, and ensure that they include the updated PILOs, as these files and specifications are considered the reference that the faculty members and the programme managers are depending on, to deliver the programme and ensure the academic standards of the students and the graduates.

- 1.6 The University has a teaching and learning strategy that identifies the basic principles, which faculty members should take into account during the teaching and learning processes, such as: encouraging student 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 of the classroom. The course files provided during the site visit indicate that the courses' specifications determine the mechanisms and strategies of teaching and learning required in every course, and how they contribute to achieving its 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 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 There is a clear institutional policy, which covers all aspects of the assessment process, and both the faculty members and the students are aware of it. 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 specifications are distributed to them in the first lecture of each semester. Moreover, the Panel found that examination papers and classwork, incorporating instructors' comments, are returned to students to be reviewed with the course instructor during the office hours declared by each faculty member. During interviews, the students also confirmed that they receive appropriate and prompt feedback about the results of the assessments, in addition to receiving oral direct feedback about their assignments. Furthermore, there is a system for the submission of appeals of assessment grades, through which the student's answers are re-evaluated by a committee consisting of two faculty members – not including the course instructor who corrected the examination; this was confirmed by the students during their interviews. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies to assess the students' achievements, which are suitable for the Bachelor programme in Islamic studies, 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 properly verifying academic plagiarism in the programme (see paragraph: 3.3). Additionally, the programme does not apply the University System of Examinations Moderation and Student Assessment in an integrated manner (see paragraphs: 3.5 and 3.6). Hence, the Panel urges the College to expedite addressing this matter.

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

- There is a clear academic plan that includes appropriate objectives for the programme's type and level, which are aligned with the mission of the College of Arts and the UoB's strategic goals.
- The curriculum of the programme covers different fields that are necessary for the discipline, and it is organized in a proper manner, which allows course-by-course progression throughout the academic years, to ensure suitable study workloads for the students.
- The courses cover the objectives and PILOs, and the syllabi of the courses are well-documented in terms of depth, breadth and the utilized learning resources.
- There is a variety of teaching and learning methods followed by the programme, which are appropriate to the programme, and contribute to achieving its learning outcomes.

- There are clear policies for assessing students' achievements, which are suitable for the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme, and the faculty members and students are aware of them.

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

- study the possibility of including an internship course for work-based learning within the curriculum, to reduce the gap between the theoretical aspects and the practical aspects in the programme
- offer an adequate number of elective courses every semester, to provide students with a real opportunity of choosing between these courses
- review and revise the specifications of both the programme and the courses, to ensure that they include the recent intended learning outcomes of the programme, and use these outcomes to ensure the academic standards of both the students and the graduates
- apply procedures that contribute to using e-learning appropriately, 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, 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 (80%-89.9%) in high school, are required to sit for an exemption test for the foundation programme. The University accepts under certain conditions students who transfer internally or from other universities, where equivalent courses in which they had obtained (C) as a minimum score can be exempted. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a clear policy of admission, published at the university level, and known to all stakeholders. The Panel notes, however, that the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies does not participate in identifying the profile of students who are admitted into the programme and that admission requirements have not been benchmarked with their equivalent in other programmes. The Panel urges the College to address this matter (see the paragraph: 3.2).
- 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). Moreover, the records of the admitted students in the programme of Bachelor in Islamic Studies are compatible with the programme's objectives, as the admission requirements of the University are adequate to attract students who are properly qualified to join the programme. The Panel found during interviews with students from different academic levels of the programme that they have intellectual abilities and skills that enable them to understand the courses in the programme. The statistics show that the number of students in the preparatory year and the first year of the programme is increasing, and female students have the higher percentage. Furthermore, the statistics provided in the SER, indicates that only (38%) of the students completed the academic requirements within (4) years as per the study plan, while the remaining students spent longer periods. About (22%) of the students spent more than (5) years studying, which is considered a high percentage, and the Panel is of the view that it is urgent to investigate the reasons behind that. As indicated in (paragraph: 2.1), neither the faculty members nor the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies have participated in identifying the specifications of the admitted students to the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme, which leads to

inconsistency within the profiles of the admitted students. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should develop a mechanism to involve the faculty of the Department in the process of identifying the attributes of the admitted students, to ensure that the capabilities of the admitted students are appropriate to the programme's requirements.

- 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. There is a clear description for 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 The section of Islamic Studies includes (32) full-time faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme, and consisting of (2) professors, (5) associate professors, (12) assistant professors, in addition to (4) lecturers and assistants for research and teaching. Moreover, the Department employs (8) part-time academic members to teach some courses of the programme. According to the SER, and the method used by the University to calculate the student-faculty ratio, it reaches 30:1 in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme, which is a reasonable ratio. By examining the profiles of the faculty members, the Panel found that there is an adequate variety in the fields of specialization, as their profiles include the whole specializations offered by the programme, and the Panel noted that the faculty members graduated from different scientific schools of thought. However, their profiles do not reflect large efforts in research that help to develop the programme and increase its effectiveness. The Panel was informed during the interviews conducted with faculty members that their teaching workload is (12) credit hours per week, and they are allowed to teach additional paid courses that may reach to two courses. This is done with the department's responsibility of teaching university and college requirements related to Islamic Studies, which thus leads to raising their teaching workload. As the University

expects the academic staff members to participate in its committees and conduct research activities, the Panel urges the College to adopt solutions for mitigating the teaching workloads of the faculty members, in order to achieve a balance between both their teaching and research efforts. This is by recruiting new academic members who are able to enrich the various minor specializations within the programme, or by employing the most distinguished graduates as research assistants, to build a second row of academics within the Department. During interviews with the faculty, the Panel learned that the University has suspended the sabbatical system due to both financial reasons and the low number of faculty members; however, the Panel stresses the importance of returning the sabbatical system for faculty members including the assistant professors, which can support the scientific research process in the Department. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should adopt practical solutions to achieve a balance between the teaching and the research workloads of the faculty members and ensure the effectiveness of these solutions.

- 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 and transparent manner. There is also a form to evaluate the performance of the faculty members, which is filled up electronically and regularly by the students. The Head of Department (HoD) also evaluates faculty members based on several aspects: their academic activity, teaching performance, relationships with colleagues, 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 terminated 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 promotion, which includes standards for forming academic promotion committees at the department, college, and university levels, as well as, operational mechanisms for these committees, and requirements and standards for 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 promotion arrangements of the

Department in terms of 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 is 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 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 recording absences and monitoring students' grades online. The E-learning Centre also 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 Management Information 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, although the Panel appreciates that there is an MIS that is suitable for the programme objectives and needs, the Panel advises the College to further utilize this system 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 their students' data. In regard to the process of grades entry, it is assigned to the course instructor only, and approved by the HoD. It also can 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 policies and procedures that 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 members toured the University and the College, from which they learned that the College of Arts buildings include an adequate number of classrooms, each accommodating (40-50) students and equipped with computers and projectors that are necessary for presenting course contents, in addition to a number of multi-purpose halls accommodating more than (100) students. Moreover, the University provides places for students inside the campus such as sports halls, besides many other places available for them to practice their activities (e.g. the club of arts and music, theater, chess, media, cinema, gym, wellness center, and offices for the students' council). Alongside the available (Wi-Fi) service in the laboratories, the College of Arts, and the campus in general, the university provides email services to students and faculty members. The University also provides a sufficient number of individual offices for the academic staff, equipped with computers, and adequate for working and meeting students. There are also offices for part-time faculty members. Moreover, there are online systems (Blackboard & Moodle) provided by Zain E-learning Centre and enabling 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. During the inspection tour at the library, the availability of textbooks, references, and adequate electronic resources that serve the students and faculty was evident, 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 the classrooms and

laboratories are generated by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and posted on the doors, 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. 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, or the available computer applications and 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 courses 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 an 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 students for the challenges of the labour market by providing them with several services such as: 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. In addition to that, the University provides the students with a comprehensive health support through the Department of Healthcare, as well

as, the Department of Safety and Security in order to maintain their safety and security. 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 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 was noted. The Panel also urges the University to expand the measurement of satisfaction toward 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 is 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, and 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 is of the view that the Induction Day still needs more improvements to be more effective, in order to achieve its expected aims. The Panel appreciates the arrangements taken by the university administration to introduce the newly admitted students 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 future incoming students.
- 2.12 According to the SER, the programme follows the System of Academic Advising at UoB, which is detailed in the Faculty Handbook and states that the HoD should appoint an academic advisor for each enrolled student, and then inform the Deanship of Admission and Registration, to add 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 receiving 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 benefited from these mechanisms. Accordingly, the Panel acknowledges that there are mechanisms for academic advising, and advises the College to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and their contribution in improving the academic performance of the student.

2.13 The UoB provides various opportunities to expand the knowledge and experience of students, through supporting activities, including: participation in activities in cooperation with the college associations and clubs, as well as 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 policy of admission, published at the university level, and known to all stakeholders.
- There is a clear and appropriate organizational structure for the programme management, with which the staff and students are familiar.
- The University has transparent procedures relating to the recruitment process, and the performance evaluation of the 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 programme's students, 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 for the students, which are adequate, and with which students are highly satisfied.
- There are appropriate arrangements at the university level to introduce the new students to the programme, the 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 Department should:

- develop a mechanism to involve the faculty of the Department in the process of identifying the attributes of admitted students, to ensure that their capabilities are appropriate for the programme's requirements
- adopt practical solutions to achieve a balance between the teaching and the research workloads of the faculty members and ensure the effectiveness of these solutions
- develop and implement an appropriate plan to assist faculty members to be promoted academically
- 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
- 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.

2.16 **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 The University of Bahrain identifies general attributes for the graduates developed in the form of ULIOs 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 ULIOs. 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), the former unmeasurable PILOs are the ones used in the mapping process. 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). Hence, the Panel urges the College to expedite addressing this matter.
- 3.2 The UoB has defined policy and procedures for benchmarking internally and externally, which explain how the objectives of the benchmarking process are determined and managed, and how results are utilized. The Panel reviewed the implemented benchmarking practices by the Department for the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme with other similar programmes offered in regional and Arab Gulf universities. The Panel observed that these benchmarking practices are informal and based on information that is available on the web pages of these universities, and do not conform to the policy and systems of the University in this regard. 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, and from the provided evidence, the Panel found that these informal benchmarking practices had 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 did not include the review of the academic standards, the ILOs, and the graduate attributes, nor did it cover 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 study and examinations document of the University. 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 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 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. However, 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. Despite the availability of the Turnitin System in the University, the Panel was not provided by evidence that this system is used properly in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme to ensure the authenticity of the student works, as well as, the provided research papers. 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 study and examinations document 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 members 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 on the measurement of 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 on assessment procedures and their alignment with learning outcomes, in accordance with the study and examination system of UoB, and consequently expedite the implementation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of CILOs and PILOs achievement in a more rigorous manner.
- 3.5 The UoB has for all academic programmes of its colleges a system of internal moderation in relation to developing assessment tools and granting grades. Both the study and examinations system of UoB, and the Assessment and Moderation Policy, state 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 of the examination papers, and of students' works.

However, this matter has not been conducted by specialists or 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 the 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. The Panel observed that there are policies for pre and post internal moderation of 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 of assessment tools used in the programme and should assess their effectiveness and assign moderators who are 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 internal and external moderation mechanisms pre and post 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'. Furthermore, the evidence refers to an issued decision concerning the use of external moderators, though this decision has not been activated yet in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme. Consequently, the Panel recommends that the College should implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of assessments, where external moderation feedback contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses.
- 3.7 The Panel examined the course files throughout different levels, including samples of students assessed work, through which it was revealed that there are various assessment types and strategies used in the programme, such as multiple-choice questions, short answers and essay questions, field trip reports, mini-research papers, assignments, and homework. In addition to that, the Panel was informed during the interviews with faculty members and students that the students deliver oral presentations, through which the communication skills are assessed. The Panel also observed that some of the student works and the examinations questions have benefited from the NQF level descriptors in an attempt to measure the higher order skills of the students, but this is still limited. The Panel recognizes that the samples of students work that were presented to the Panel are generally compatible with what are expected in similar programmes. However, the academic plagiarism policy of the university is not implemented, which obscures the authenticity of students' work, especially those related to studies and research. The Panel urges the College to address this matter (see paragraph: 3.3).

- 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 from the 103 graduates of the programme, (10%) had graduated with 'Excellent' scores, while (24%) scored 'Very Good', (34%) 'Good' and (32%) 'Pass' 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 capability of students to conduct good research through the capstone project course (ISLM 488) 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. The evidence provided to the Panel indicates that the programme has not conducted any formal surveys for the opinions of the programme stakeholders including employers and alumni, until the date of submitting the SER. However, recently a questionnaire was designed for this purpose. The Panel urges the College to expedite the utilization of these surveys (see paragraph: 4.8). 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. However, the Panel recommends that the College should apply these mechanisms in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme 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 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 indicate that the number of students admitted into the programme was increasing during the last three years, and that most of the admitted are female students. As for the first destination of the graduates, the provided statistics indicate that (90%), and (75%) of the graduates in the academic years 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 respectively tend to work in jobs related to their field of specialization. The Panel recognizes that these percentages are consistent with what is expected from the programme. According to the provided statistics in the SER, there were (103) graduates from the programme, in the academic years (from 2013-2014 to 2015-2016), (38%) of them had completed the graduation requirements in (4) years -as required by the study plan- while, (21%) had completed these requirements in (5) years, and (22%) in (5.5) years or more. The Panel notes that

there are students spending long periods to complete the requirements of the programme. Additionally, the Panel was not provided with any statistics about students withdrawal or progression rates. The Panel recognizes that there is a general lack 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 them and utilize its results in improving the programme.

- 3.10 The study plan of the programme includes a compulsory capstone course (ISLM 488), with (3) credit hours, which is offered in the last semester of the study plan. 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 their supervisor, and recording the research's grade in a specific form. The interviewed faculty members indicated that the capstone project is considered as a specialized course, which is based on practical application, as it allows the student to apply the experiences, knowledge, and skills that he/she has acquired from other courses in practice. They also mentioned that the first lectures of this course are dedicated for teaching and training the students to use scientific research skills. Nevertheless, some students interviewed by the Panel during the site visit indicated that this course needs to focus more on the practical aspect in order to develop their research skills and abilities. The Panel reviewed a sample of the students' research, which is generally of an appropriate level. However, the Panel urges the College to apply the university policy of academic plagiarism, in order to ensure the authenticity of the student works. The Panel observed also that the assessment form of the course does not map the assessment and the grades granted to the students with the CILOs, and the capstone project course was not incorporated in the matrix of mapping the programme courses with their objectives and outcomes. Consequently, the Panel was not provided with evidence indicating that the assessments measure the achievement of CILOs of the capstone project course. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there are appropriate procedures that are followed to manage the capstone project, and that both the faculty and students are aware of them, and urges the College to map the course assessment to the learning outcomes required for the course and the programme in general (see paragraph: 3.3).

- 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 in Islamic Studies programme. The committee 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 suggestions 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 Islamic studies, who are able to enrich the programme with observations about the needs of the labour market. 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 that the programme managers accepted 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 ensure an effective role for the advisory 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 provided evidence indicates that -until the date of submitting the SER- the programme had not conducted any formal surveys for its stakeholders like employers and alumni; however, there is a questionnaire that has been recently designed. Moreover, the SER indicates that the College had distributed this questionnaire to the members of the advisory committee of the programme and had received -until the date of writing this SER - responses from (4) members only, which is considered a small sample and its results cannot be counted on. Nevertheless, there was general satisfaction toward the programme with a percentage of (75%). While the level of satisfaction toward a number of themes such as: 'develop the love of reading for the students', and 'prepare the student for the postgraduate studies' was not relatively high and the level of satisfaction was also low in regard to 'the written and oral communication skills'. The employers and alumni who were interviewed during the site visit expressed their general satisfaction toward the programme, and they suggested developing the delivery of the programme in ways that equip graduating students with wider abilities of critical and analytical thinking. Hence, the Panel notes that there is an appropriate percentage of satisfaction toward the programme and its outcomes in general, and advises the College to look at the themes that received less levels of satisfaction. The Panel also urges the College to apply effective procedures 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, 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 on assessment procedures and their alignment with learning outcomes, in accordance with UoB's study and examination system, and consequently expedite the implementation of the course assessment form, as well as, the measurement of the CILOs and PILOs achievement in a more rigorous manner
- activate the university arrangements related to pre and post internal moderation of assessment tools used in the programme, and assess their effectiveness, and assign moderators who are specialists
- implement appropriate formal procedures for the external moderation of assessments, where the feedback of the external moderation contributes to developing the programme and improving its courses
- apply the direct and indirect mechanisms of measuring graduates' level of achievement in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies programme regularly, and measure their effectiveness
- utilize the available statistics about student cohorts, in conducting a detailed analysis about them and utilize its results in improving the programme
- ensure an effective role for the advisory committee, follow a clear methodology, and identify topics that are presented to and reviewed by the committee, in addition to a mechanism of addressing the committee's observations.

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. The programme of the Bachelor in Islamic Studies that follows the Department of

Arabic Language and Islamic Studies at the College of Arts 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. The committees 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 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 affect the effectiveness of his/her leadership role in the Department.

- 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 for 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 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 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 use of the course assessment form was used only in a 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 that was issued in June 2016. 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 measure 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 of all quality assurance issues by the academic members. 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, which ensures a high level of achievement of the programme 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 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 stakeholders 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 in Islamic Studies programme has reviewed and improved it throughout the academic year based on a group of internal mechanisms. 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 generates 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, 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' achievements, 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. 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 in Islamic Studies. 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 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 and the PILOs were rewritten, but this was not reflected in the programme documents and course specifications. The Panel also 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 The SER states that the Measurement and Evaluation Centre has gathered feedback from the students through the course assessment and the academic staff evaluation forms, which are filled up electronically by the students at the end of each semester. Both the academic and administrative staff members interviewed by the Panel during the site visit indicated that the analysis of these forms are conducted by the Centre and that the academic staff member has benefited from these results in developing the course and the used teaching and learning methods. The HoD also benefits from these results in evaluating the faculty member. Other than that, the report referred to the lack of gathering feedback about the programme from the stakeholders in a regular manner (see paragraph: 3.12). The SER also indicates that the programme relies on the feedback gathered from the meetings of the employers and alumni advisory committee. However, this committee has been recently established, and it had 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, the faculty members of the programme indicated that they are in the process of surveying the employers and the alumni in order to receive their feedback that contributes to the programme improvement. Despite the importance of these surveys, they do 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. 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 documented policies and institutional systems in place, meeting the programme needs, and communicated to the faculty members.

- There are formal policies and procedures that are appropriate to the quality assurance at the university and the college levels.
- There are appropriate arrangements and procedures at the university level for reviewing the academic programmes.
- The University provides several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Learning and Leadership Skills, for developing the teaching and professional practices of new and senior faculty members.

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

- Develop the approaches of monitoring and assessing the system of quality assurance management in the programme, and measure its effectiveness
- Implement the university policy of periodical review of the programme in a comprehensive and continuous manner, as well as, develop mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the implementation of improvement plans
- Continue the development of mechanisms for surveying opinions of all stakeholders -especially external ones-, analyze their results periodically and regularly, and inform the stakeholders of their outcomes
- Implement periodical, rigorous, and comprehensive studies for scoping both long-term and short-term needs of the labor market to utilize them in programme development.

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 limited confidence in the Bachelor in Islamic Studies offered by the University of Bahrain.