



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

# Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Institutional Review Report

University of Bahrain  
Kingdom of Bahrain

**Date Reviewed: 14-18 April 2019**

HI013-C2-R006

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## Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ABET	Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology
AIMS	Assessment Information Management System
ATO	Administrative Training Office
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BoT	Board of Trustees
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
COBIT	Control Objectives for Information and Related Technologies
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EDGE	Electronic Database for Global Education
HE	Higher Education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of the Department
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PCAP	Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practices
PD	Professional Development
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome

QA	Quality Assurance
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QAAEC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Executive Committee
QAE	Quality Assurance Executive Committee
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QS	Quacquarelli Symonds
SAC	Student Advisory Committee
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System
UoB	University of Bahrain
UILO	University Intended Learning Outcome
UTEL	Unit for Teaching and Excellence and Leadership
VP	Vice President

## I. Introduction

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

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

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

**Table 1: Overall Judgements**

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

## II. The Institution Profile

Institution Name	University of Bahrain
Year of Establishment	1986
Location	Sakhir, Salmanya, Isa Town
Number of Colleges	9
Names of Colleges	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bahrain's Teachers' College</li> <li>2. College of Applied Studies</li> <li>3. College of Arts</li> <li>4. College of Business Administration</li> <li>5. College of Engineering</li> <li>6. College of Health Science</li> <li>7. College of Information Technology</li> <li>8. College of Law</li> <li>9. College of Science</li> </ol>
Number of Qualifications	85
Number of Programmes	85
Number of Enrolled Current Students	+28,000 students
Number of Graduates	+60,000
Number of Academic Staff Members	689 full-time faculty members
Number of Administrative Staff Members	934 full-time administrative staff members

### III. Judgment Summary

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

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgment
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>Mission, Governance and Management</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 1	Mission	Addressed
Indicator 2	Governance and Management	Addressed
Indicator 3	Strategic Plan	Addressed
Indicator 4	Organizational Structure	Addressed
Indicator 5	Management of Academic Standards:	Addressed
Indicator 6	Partnerships, Memoranda and Cross Border Education	Not Applicable
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Quality Assurance and Enhancement</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 7	Quality Assurance	Addressed
Indicator 8	Benchmarking and Surveys	Addressed
Indicator 9	Security of Learner Records and Certification	Addressed
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 10	Learning Resources	Addressed
Indicator 11	ICT	Addressed
Indicator 12	Infrastructure	Addressed
<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>The Quality of Teaching and Learning</b>	<b>Addressed</b>
Indicator 13	Management of Teaching and Learning Programmes	Addressed
Indicator 14	Admissions	Addressed
Indicator 15	Introduction and Review of Programmes	Addressed

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

## IV. Standards and Indicators

### Standard 1

#### Mission, Governance and Management

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

#### **Indicator 1: Mission**

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

Judgement: Addressed

The mission of the University of Bahrain (UoB) is intended to support and underpin UoB's vision to become a 'world-class university'. It reflects the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement, as UoB strives to 'directly contribute' to the economic prosperity of the country, which is in line with Bahrain's National Strategy and Economic Vision 2030, that includes educational priorities and highlights the need for a 'first rate education system'. The mission is also appropriate for a university, and specifically UoB's status as it is the only national University in the country that offers a wide range of qualifications. The mission statement has been translated into seven strategic pillars in the Transformation Plan. During the site visit interviews, the Panel heard that the University contributes to the 'economic growth and development of Bahrain' by producing graduates with the skills required to diversify the economy in line with the Economic Vision 2030, and by generating research with impact. Interviews with employers confirmed the employability of UoB's graduates, and recent initiatives, such as the establishment and opening of the Renewable Energy Laboratory in collaboration with the University of Loughborough, demonstrated the University's efforts to accomplish its mission.

The mission statement was approved by the University's governing bodies namely, the University Council in November 2016, and the Board of Trustees in April 2017 as part of the approval of the overall Transformation Plan. The Panel observed during the site visit the display of the mission statement in prominent areas, such as in entrances of some buildings during the tour of UoB. However, several locations on campus and some documents (e.g. the University-wide Assessment Handbook, 'IDEAS') still have the previous mission statement on display, therefore, UoB is advised to replace these with the current version. The mission statement is also provided on UoB's website and in key university documents such as the Transformation Plan, the Academic Plan, and Annual Reports. The Panel notes that the mission statement is not included in any of the student documentation or the Faculty Handbook, which has contributed to the low level of awareness of the mission amongst staff and students, as was observed by the Panel in interviews during the site visit. The Panel is of the view that the University needs to take steps to ensure that relevant stakeholders are aware of the mission statement, so that they

can effectively contribute to its achievement. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement appropriate strategies to increase awareness about UoB's mission amongst all its internal stakeholders.

The mission statement was reviewed and revised in 2016 as part of the University's strategic planning process, which resulted in the development of a new strategic plan, termed the Transformation Plan, for the period 2016 - 2021. The Panel found evidence of stakeholders' involvement in the development of the Transformation Plan, and the mission and vision of UoB. Staff from all of UoB's Colleges and various centres and units were consulted on the University's strengths, possible changes and vision of the University during a series of meetings held in May and June 2016. The meetings were documented, and the feedback analysed to determine the key areas and priorities for the next strategic planning cycle. An online survey was also conducted, and input from external stakeholders was sought. The Panel notes, however, that there was no direct involvement of students in this process, and the involvement of external stakeholders was also very limited. UoB plans to widen its consultation process when the mission statement is reviewed again, to include regional and international stakeholders. The Panel supports this and recommends that the University should develop and implement appropriate strategies and mechanisms to widen the involvement of external (local, regional and international) stakeholders in the development and review of the mission and vision. The Panel additionally encourages UoB to also include students in this process through existing fora, such as the Student Council and Student Advisory Committees (SACs), as well as other relevant student representatives.

During the site visit, the Panel was informed that the mission statement is reviewed by using the 'System for Proposing, Reviewing and Developing Policies' document; although, the Panel notes that this document does not make any specific reference to the mission, and includes only policies and procedures. Nevertheless, the mission was reviewed in 2016 as part of the strategic planning process, taking into account the national context and priorities and international trends in higher education, such as the use of technology, which is explicitly mentioned in the University's mission statement. During the site visit, the Panel also learned about specific initiatives to achieve this, such as the move towards e-learning, an electronic meeting system to record and manage University Council meetings, and the imminent introduction of block chain graduation certificates. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Develop and implement appropriate strategies to increase awareness about UoB's mission amongst all internal stakeholders.
- Develop and implement appropriate strategies and mechanisms to widen the involvement of external (local, regional and international) stakeholders and students in the development and review of the mission and vision.

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

The composition of the University's supreme governance body, the Board of Trustees (BoT), is defined in the Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999, and includes the Chair (HE the Minister of Education) and 11 Board members, all of whom are either Ministers or other high-ranking government officials. The President of UoB is also a member of the BoT. Members of the BoT are appointed for a period of four years, which is subject to renewal, and are provided with a presentation about the University as an induction. The most recent BoT was selected in December 2018, at which time four new members were appointed. The list of BoT members is prominently displayed on the UoB website. The responsibilities of the BoT include approving UoB's higher education policy and bylaws, approving the budget, establishing regulations for managing UoB funds, approving partnerships, establishing Vice-President posts, accepting gifts, approving fees, and re-structuring the University. These responsibilities are clearly defined in the Amiri Decrees and broadly appropriate for a governance body. Evidence of their implementation was found by the Panel in the minutes of BoT meetings held over the last three years, which show that the BoT conducts its responsibilities in line with their terms of reference, as defined in the Amiri Decrees. The minutes also show that there is generally a separation of governance and management at the University, with the BoT discussing and making decisions primarily on strategic matters.

The Panel notes that there were no BoT meetings held between November 2014 and June 2016, and also during the whole of 2018. The most recent meeting held in February 2019 (following the appointment of the new BoT in December 2018), was the first meeting of the BoT since 2017. The Board's remit stated in the Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999 does not state that number of meetings the Board ought to have each year. However, the Panel notes that the BoT normally meets once each academic year and during the site visit interviews, the Panel learned that due to the significant commitments and public responsibilities of the BoT members, decisions are sometimes made by circulation. The Panel is of the view that more regular meetings of the BoT are essential to further support the effective management and governance of the University and recommends that an annual schedule of BoT meetings should be established and implemented to ensure that key decisions are made promptly. The same findings were reported in the UoB Institutional Review Report of 2010, and a recommendation was made at that time to increase the levels of delegation to the management (Recommendation 2) since the BoT was unable to meet regularly.

In addition to the BoT, UoB has a University Council that reports to the BoT and consists of the President (Chair), the Vice-Presidents, the Deans (academic and non-academic), and 'no more than three members of expertise and scientific status appointed by the Board of Trustees for a three-year term renewed once'. While the BoT is responsible for approving policies, regulations, plans, budgets and for key appointments, the University Council has a broader input into academic and non-academic matters at the University, and is responsible for proposing UoB's general higher education policy, bylaws, budgets

and organisational structure; organising cultural affairs; establishing academic posts; proposing Vice-Presidents; accepting gifts; granting awards; organising admissions; resource planning (including faculty appointments and promotions); establishing the teaching and assessment system; planning the required educational infrastructure and resources; and setting the academic calendar. The Panel viewed a sample of decisions taken by the University Council, which shows how these responsibilities are executed in practice. During the site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that meetings of the University Council are held on a bi-weekly basis,, an electronic system is used to support the meetings in terms of agenda, folders, and archiving of meetings decision and minutes, and there are plans to extend the use of this system to the BoT meetings in the future.

Each College and Academic Department at UoB has its own 'local' council responsible for oversight of the College and Department, respectively. The membership, roles and responsibilities of the College and Departmental Councils are also defined in the Amiri Decrees. The composition of each Council includes relevant faculty members, including the Dean and Department Chairs at the College level, and the Department Chair and faculty members at the Department level. There is a clear line of reporting from the Department Councils to College Councils, followed by the University Council, and, ultimately the BoT. All three levels of councils have corresponding committees with which they co-ordinate on specific matters. The four-layer governance hierarchy, and membership and composition of each Council, ensure that matters are thoroughly discussed and presented at all levels before being approved.

The management of the University consists of the President, Vice-Presidents and College Deans. The President is appointed by Royal Decree based on the BoT's nomination, for a four-year term which can be renewed once. The current UoB President was appointed in 2016. According to the Quality Manual of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC), there are five Vice-Presidents (VP) at UoB, namely, VP for Community Service and Alumni Affairs; VP for Planning and Development; VP for Academic Programmes and Graduate Studies; VP for Information Technology, Administration and Finance; and VP for Scientific Research. However, the Panel noted conflicting evidence of this, and couldn't establish the exact number of Vice President positions currently at UoB due to recent changes to the organisational structure that are ongoing (see Indicator 4). Each College at UoB has a Dean, and certain other units (such as Admissions and Registration, Student Affairs, and Graduate Studies and Scientific Research) are also classified as Deanships and have a Dean at the head.

The governance and management system at UoB has not yet been reviewed for effectiveness. The Panel found that there are no mechanisms in place to ensure that the system is appropriate, and that relevant delegations of authority are being discharged, so that the functioning and management of the University are continuously enhanced. In response to evidence requested by the Panel showing how the governance and management systems are evaluated, the University responded: 'Not Applicable'. The Panel recommends that UoB should develop and implement a review process to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the four-tier governance hierarchy, starting with Departmental Councils, as well as the overall management system consisting of the functional management roles and the committee structure at the University.

The financial management of the University is governed by the University Finance Bylaw issued in 2006. The University also adheres to the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Finance. As a public University, UoB receives its funding from the government as an allocation in its annual budget. UoB is

also included under the supervision of the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and must comply with the framework for civil servants, which has implications for its finances because staff ranks, positions and benefits must be in alignment with the CSB requirements. The Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999 and the Finance Bylaw provide information about the delegations of authority for financial management decisions. The BoT is responsible for approving the University budget and financial plans, which are prepared by the University Council. According to Article 23, the President 'shall manage the University's administrative, financial and scientific affairs', while the 'Vice President for Information Technology, Administration and Finance is responsible for the general supervision of the administrative and financial aspects'. The Panel found that these delegations of authority applied in practice with the President having general oversight of financial management, and the Vice-President being responsible for operational matters related to the University's finances. The BoT has also established an Audit and Finance Committee to monitor financial management at the University. The delegation of authority for management decisions is less clear due to the lack of an up-to-date and accurate organisational structure, which is currently under review (refer to Indicator 4).

The Panel notes that the University's strategic plan, the Transformation Plan, consists of seven pillars (see Indicator 3). However, the Ministry of Finance requires that the budget is prepared and maintained in line with its five chapters: manpower, services, consumables, assets and maintenance. While there is evidence that financial resources are allocated to activities, initiatives and projects mentioned in the Transformation Plan (and related operational plans), the overall alignment of financial resources to support the achievement of the Transformation Plan is not evident. None of the financial documents requested and provided to the Panel has references to the seven pillars in the Transformation Plan. The Panel recommends that UoB should demonstrate more clearly how the alignment of its Transformation Plan, financial allocations from the Ministry of Finance, resources, student enrolments and programme offerings support the quality of provision. Although there is limited scope to change the financial allocations (chapters) imposed by the Ministry of Finance, this alignment can be established internally, within UoB, through the budgeting process by ensuring that resource requirements are linked to operational and strategic plans and goals.

The Finance Bylaw describes the process for preparing the University's budget. It stipulates that the President of the University forms a committee chaired by the VP for Information Technology, Administration and Finance to prepare the annual budget. The work of the committee is guided by the policies set by the BoT, and the estimated budget is developed based on available data about the number of students, required resources, including faculty and administrative staff, and future development projects approved by the BoT. The committee analyses these requirements and submits a detailed report to the President along with recommendations regarding the proposed budget. The proposed budget is then discussed at the University Council and approved by the BoT, before being submitted to the Ministry of Finance. The Panel confirmed this process in the documentation and interviews with relevant staff members during the site visit.

The BoT's Audit and Finance Committee confirms the accuracy of financial reports, and ensures that UoB abides by legal and audit requirements. The BoT also appoints an external auditor, as required by the Finance Bylaw, to audit the University's financial statements each year, and the Panel was provided with evidence of the external audit reports. Additional accountability and financial checks are in place

through the Ministry of Finance, and the CSB. An internal auditing process is undertaken by the Internal Audit Unit, which conducts compliance audits, performance evaluations, information systems audits and consultation services. In addition to financial auditing, the Internal Audit Office is responsible for audit of other entities and units. These external and internal audits are appropriate review mechanisms to prevent and detect fraud. Reports are published by the Internal Audit Unit and provided to the BoT. The University indicated that it is planning to publish executive summaries of audit reports suitable for target stakeholders such as faculty and students. The Panel supports this to further enhance transparent reporting of finances to relevant stakeholders, which is in line with international standards for public HEIs.

Based on the overall approach to governance and management, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendations

- Implement an annual schedule of BoT meetings that supports effective governance by ensuring that key decisions are made in a timely manner.
- Develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to periodically review the effectiveness of the governance and management system at UoB.
- Demonstrate more clearly how the alignment of the Transformation Plan, financial allocations from the Ministry of Finance, resources, student enrolments and programme offerings support the quality of provision.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

UoB has a current strategic plan, which is referred to as the 'Transformation Plan' for the period from 2016 to 2021. The Plan was developed and launched in 2016, following the appointment of the new President in April 2016 to replace the earlier 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. It presents the University's 'strategy' for this five-year period and a 'blueprint' showing how its contribution to the economic growth of Bahrain will be achieved. The Panel notes that the University does not have a formal strategic planning process which describes how strategic planning is done (how often, by whom, what are the steps and approvals needed, how is stakeholder input obtained, etc.). However, the Panel found evidence of consultation amongst internal stakeholders related to the development of the Transformation Plan. Meetings were held with staff in Colleges and Departments in May and June 2016 to conduct a SWOT analysis and obtain feedback about the University's strengths, opportunities for improvement and actions that are needed to be taken in the future. An online survey was also conducted and the feedback was recorded, analysed and used to develop a draft Transformation Plan. The Panel was informed during the site visit interviews that this draft was written by a senior staff member and was then circulated to internal and external stakeholders, including the Economic Development Board

(EDB), for their input and comments, before being presented to the University Council and BoT for approval in November 2016 and April 2017 respectively.

The Transformation Plan consists of seven strategic pillars, of which four cover the three core functions (teaching and learning – Pillar 1 ‘World class learning and teaching’; research – Pillar 3 ‘Research with national and regional impact’; and community engagement – Pillar 5 ‘Local engagement and international reputation’; and Pillar 6 ‘Bahrain’s economic diversification and growth’). The remaining three pillars are concerned with developing resources, including human capital (Pillar 2), and physical infrastructure (Pillar 7), and creating an entrepreneurial environment to support sustainability (Pillar 4). Each of the seven pillars is described in detail in the Transformation Plan, by providing a rationale and explanation for the pillar and outlining a list of what UoB aims to achieve in relation to the pillar (‘what UoB will do’). The Panel sought clarity with regards to this list and found that it represented a set of ‘goals’, although the Transformation Plan does not specifically refer to ‘goals’. The SER refers to these ‘goals’ as ‘objectives’, while some of the Initiatives Progress Reports also use the term ‘goals’. Conversely, the University’s Academic Plan states that the Transformation Plan ‘encaps a comprehensive set of objectives and aims’. Staff interviewed by the Panel were not aware of the correct terminology to be applied. Thus, the Panel recommends that the University should ensure using consistent terminology to support the planning processes, so that goals, objectives and indicators are clearly defined for all levels of planning, and applied in developing strategic and operational plans.

A set of ‘measures of success’ is defined for each strategic pillar, but there are no related targets, timeframes or delegations assigned to them in the Transformation Plan itself. The SER refers to these ‘measures of success’ as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) used ‘to evaluate the progress and impact of implementing the Transformation Plan’. In addition to these ‘measures of success’, the Transformation Plan has a set of 18 ‘Institutional Targets’ grouped into six different areas related to the three core functions (including academic, reputation, innovation, labour market, research and lifelong learning). There is no direct link between these 18 targets/indicators and the ‘measures of success’ under each strategic pillar. Quantitative data for 2016 (baseline) and 2021 (target) is provided for each of the 18 Institutional Targets in the Transformation Plan, however, no annual targets are specified to measure progress over the five years. The Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement measurable targets for the performance indicators (‘measures of success’) identified in the Transformation Plan, and related targets in the University’s operational plans, to facilitate improved monitoring and implementation of the strategic goals, and report on performance to relevant stakeholders on a regular basis.

The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Executive Committee (QAAC) is monitoring and reviewing the initiatives’ progress along with the implementation of the Transformation Plan. This committee is chaired by the Director of the QAAC, with membership from all of the Colleges. The SER describes various means for monitoring progress and refers interchangeably to annual operational plans, annual initiatives and annual reports by the Departments at UoB. During the interviews, the Panel learned that an ‘Initiatives Progress Report Template 2018-2019’ was developed in 2018 for the specific purpose of evaluating the advancement towards the strategic pillars in the Transformation Plan, as other mechanisms developed in 2017 had proved ineffective. Samples of Initiatives Progress Report templates were provided to the Panel, which were inconsistent in the reporting format. While some reports

included specific references to pillars and goals in the Transformation Plan, to demonstrate the relationship between College initiatives and the Transformation Plan, others did not include, and therefore a link between the College initiatives and the Transformation Plan presented in the reports could not be established. Furthermore, none of the reports contained any references to the 'measures of success' for each pillar or the 18 Institutional Targets. The Colleges' individual Initiatives Progress Reports are consolidated into a University report by including all of the reports in a single document, but no analysis is provided. However, while the use of the Initiatives Progress Reports as a monitoring mechanism for the Transformation Plan is tenuous, there are other efforts at the University level to track performance against the Plan. This is done through a summary of performance against the 18 Institutional Targets, which is prepared by the QAAC every year, and includes quantitative data against each indicator, and a full report.

The University has an Operational Plan which consists of a series of goals described as 'General Goals' and 'objectives' described as 'sub-goals' derived from the goals under each strategic pillar in the Transformation Plan. Performance indicators are specified for each objective, but no annual targets are set. Each objective also has assigned responsibilities. Progress is monitored towards the objectives, however, without targets, the Panel found it difficult to establish how this is done in practice. Each College and other units, such as Departments, also have their own operational plans but these plans are not related to the University's Operational Plan or the Transformation Plan. Instead, they consist of 'actions/initiatives' related to programmes, courses, assessment moderation, student surveys, peer observation, and other operational matters. Although the term 'initiatives' is used in these operational plans, these are not related to the initiatives in the Initiatives Progress Reports described above. There are assigned start and end dates and responsibilities for each action/initiative, in some operational plans, but no targets. Progress is monitored based on the date that the action/initiative has been deemed as achieved and reported within the operational plans. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a consistent approach to operational planning that is in alignment with the University's Operational Plan and Transformation Plan.

Overall, UoB has comprehensive strategic and operational plans in place with respect to its three-core function. The evidence provided demonstrates that these plans are monitored separately and implemented. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

### Recommendations

- Ensure using consistent terminology to support the planning processes, so that goals, objectives and indicators are clearly defined for all levels of planning and are applied in developing strategic and operational plans.
- Develop and implement measurable targets for the performance indicators ('measures of success') identified in the Transformation Plan, and related objectives and initiatives in the University's operational plans, to facilitate implementation and improved monitoring of the strategic goals, and report on performance to relevant stakeholders, including the BoT, regularly.
- Develop and implement a consistent approach to unit and departmental operational planning that is in alignment with the University's Operational Plan and Transformation Plan.

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

As stated in the SER, UoB's overarching organisational structure is stipulated in the Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999, which include the terms of reference for the BoT, the University Council, and the College and Departmental Councils. The decrees also list the President, Vice-Presidents, Deans, and Head of Departments (HoDs) as the management roles, and have a provision for the establishment of additional management roles if required. The roles and responsibilities of the various Councils are stated in the Decrees, and include co-ordination and leadership. Limited information about management positions is available in the academic and administrative bylaws and the QAAC Quality Manual. Although the SER states that the UoB organisational structure is published on the University's website, the Panel could not find any evidence of this, and only the QAAC Quality Manual depicts the structure of certain Councils and units in a chart. The Panel is of the view that the absence of an accessible organisational structure chart hinders awareness about the chain of command at the University. While the Panel found that staff members were aware of who they report to directly, and that all staff have job descriptions, an overall chain of command needs to be accessible to all staff and students, so that they can understand relationships between internal stakeholders and their own role within the University.

Upon examining the provided evidences, the Panel noted several different versions of the organisational structure chart. One of these included offices for three Vice-President positions and two offices for the President, another one had five Vice-President positions. The President's position was also not mentioned on the first chart, while the second had this position reporting to the BoT. The Panel could not establish with clarity which organisational chart was current and accurate during the site visit. This is partly due to the recent review of the organisational structure that is being undertaken to ensure that UoB is in compliance with the CSB grades and requirements. UoB has been under the umbrella of the CSB since 2012 and needs to align its job descriptions and ranks/levels to those of other civil servants. The review of the structure is under way, and a proposed organisational structure, sighted by the Panel, has been presented to the CSB and discussed at the BoT meeting in February 2019. The proposed structure includes four Vice-Presidents, a reduction in the number of Deanships from 13 to 12 (following the merger of the Colleges of Health Sciences and Physical Education), and a reduction of the administrative sections by 38%. The Panel recommends that once the review of the organisational structure is complete, UoB should ensure that a single, clear, definitive organisational structure chart is developed and made accessible to all relevant stakeholders through appropriate channels, such as the website and the staff and student handbooks.

The Panel made a number of observations about the proposed organisational structure that have an impact on the management of the University. There is a direct reporting line between the President and the College Deans, as well as other Deanships and Directors. A total of 22 senior staff members report to the President, which is a wide span of control that represents a burden on the leadership of the University to oversee key areas and make decisions. The current three Vice-Presidents have a smaller

reporting span, although the VP for Information Technology, Administration and Finance has a larger reporting span than the other two Vice-Presidents. The VP for Academic Programs and Graduate Studies does not have a direct reporting relationship with the College Deans. Similarly, various administrative Deanships, such as Admission and Registration and Student Affairs, do not report to the VP for Information Technology, Administration and Finance. The University needs to benchmark its organizational structure to ensure its alignment with international good practices. The Panel recommends that the University should review the effectiveness of the organisational structure to ensure that there is appropriate co-ordination and leadership among senior management positions through delegation of authority and responsibilities that are consistent with a university.

UoB has a range of committees responsible for supporting the management functions and enabling collaborative decision making. Committees exist at the level of the University (termed 'central' committees), the College, and the Department. University level committees report to the University Council, while college and department committees report to College and Departmental Councils, respectively. The BoT also has its own committees intended to support governance, such as the Audit and Finance Committee (see Indicator 2). Each committee has its own terms of reference that include the position-based composition and the responsibilities of the committee. Although the Panel heard extensive views about the reporting structure and work of various committees, and met with a large number of committee chairs and members during the site visit, which serve as evidence of a functioning committee structure, UoB does not have a formal chart depicting this structure. Only the general terms of reference for the committees were provided to the Panel.

The effectiveness of the overall committee structure and the performance of each committee against its terms of reference have not been reviewed, however, each individual committee is required to prepare an annual Committee Progress Report, showing attendance at meetings, what it has achieved and decided, and its future plans. The Panel requested the Committee Progress Reports for all committees, but received these only for a small number of committees. Some of the Committee Progress Reports include references to College initiatives (see Indicator 3), but others are not related to any operational or strategic plans and initiatives at the University. From the Progress Reports provided, the Panel notes that committees meet on an ongoing basis and discharge their responsibilities in line with their terms of reference, although there is a lack of consistency across committees in terms of how this is reported. The Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of its committee structure.

Stakeholders' involvement in decision making is described in the SER from the perspective of the BoT, which consists entirely of external stakeholders (except the UoB President), and includes Ministers and other high-ranking government officials. The Student Council is also singled out as an example of involving students in decision making. UoB established the Student Council in 2002, and its members are elected on an annual basis, with six Colleges each having a quota, and a total of 27 students elected. The College of Health Sciences, College of Applied Studies and the Bahrain Teacher's College do not have representatives. The Student Council Bylaws are available and there is also a Student Council Division Manual. The Student Council meets on a regular basis, however, the Panel found limited evidence of its involvement in decision making. There is also no representation of students on the University Council, or the College and Departmental Councils. Faculty members are not represented on

the University Council, but there are representatives on the College and Departmental Councils, where they are involved in 'local' decision making. The outcomes of these decisions are communicated to upper levels of the organisation through College level and central committees.

At the departmental and programme level, Programme Advisory Committees (PACs) and Student Advisory Committees (SACs) provide opportunities for stakeholder involvement. According to the QAAC Quality Manual, PACs are made up of employers, alumni and market representatives. They meet once a year and their role is to advise, assist, support and advocate programmes. The Panel confirmed this during the site visit in interviews, and by viewing meeting minutes of the PACs. The Panel noted that the name, composition and meeting regularity of the PACs varied across Colleges and Departments. Some PACs were established at departmental level, with one committee serving all programmes, while others were established for one specific programme. The SACs consist of current 2nd, 3rd and 4th year students who are elected by their peers. The SACs also meet once a year, but SAC members are invited to attend PAC meetings as well. 'The main function of the SAC is to provide their feedback and inputs into courses, programmes educational objectives and services, and to ensure their high relevance to student interests'. The Panel met with student members of SACs during the site visit, and viewed samples of their meeting minutes. The evidence provided to the Panel shows that the decision-making role of students, alumni and other external stakeholders is limited to programme feedback and improvements. The Panel encourages UoB to increase and widen students', alumni and other external stakeholders' participation in decision making.

Overall, UoB has clear terms of reference for its various councils and committees, which allow for the implementation of the organisational structure, and for stakeholder participation in decision-making. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendations

- Ensure that a single, clear, definitive organizational structure chart, which includes committees, is developed and made accessible to all relevant stakeholders through appropriate channels.
- Ensure that the organizational structure has an appropriate reporting span for the President, with clear delegations of authority, in line with international good practice.
- Develop and implement a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the committee structure.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

The SER indicates that the publication of annual reports that contain key information, data and statistics about the University's progress and achievements, 'are used to provide a clear understanding of the academic standard and excellence of the University'. The BoT reviews the annual reports (as well as financial and auditor reports) 'to oversee the achievement and maintenance of the academic standards'.

UoB also cites its Employer Reputation indicator (411) in the (QS) World university ranking as evidence of the quality of its graduates.

The maintenance of academic standards relies on the University's Quality Assurance (QA) system. The University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy states that 'Academic standards and the quality of the education provision are the responsibility of the entire University community', and that there is 'a range of systems, policies, and procedures for assuring and enhancing the academic standards of awards and the quality of its educational provision'. This is achieved through several means, including programme reviews that take into account the academic standards of graduates, benchmarking processes to verify academic standards, and considering academic standards when developing new programmes, all of which were sighted by the Panel. According to the IDEAS Handbook, programme Self-Evaluation Reports (SERs) need to include information about academic standards, as well as the role of QA processes in promoting confidence in the quality of academic standards. The Panel confirmed this during the site visit and learned during interviews that programme SERs are prepared annually, although the Panel found evidence in the documentation that some programmes are reviewed every two years. UoB indicates in the SER that input from external stakeholders such as alumni and employers is also used to evaluate the academic standards of the programme and students' achievement of the learning outcomes. This is done through meetings of PACs and surveys of employers and alumni.

The Panel found a systematic approach to the alignment of programme and course learning outcomes with assessments at UoB, which is applied across the University, and contributes to the maintenance of academic standards. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are defined for each programme, and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are mapped to PILOs to determine how courses contribute to the achievement of programme level outcomes. For each CILO, the assessments used to measure its attainment are identified. A Course Portfolio Checklist is used to verify that there is alignment between PILOs, CILOs and assessments. Courses are also mapped to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level descriptors to ensure that programmes are set at an appropriate level. UoB currently has 29 of its qualifications placed on the NQF and there is a plan to place all of the qualifications by 2024. The University has also obtained external accreditation for some of its programmes, including the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for the Engineering programmes and the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) status for its College of Business Administration.

The SER claims that UoB has a 'sound system to foster the culture of high academic integrity'. Academic misconduct by staff is dealt with through the Faculty members and Administrative staff bylaws, which outline a set of processes and procedures to be followed in case of staff misconduct, through the two main disciplinary committees: The First Instance Committee and the Appeal Committee. The Panel viewed data for academic staff misconduct cases at UoB over the last three years during the site visit and confirmed that the defined process is followed.

Student misconduct is handled through the College Investigation Committee at College level, and the Student Disciplinary Committee at University level. The terms of reference for a 'Student Misconduct Investigation Committee' are available and the work of the committees is guided by the regulations provided in the Student Behavioural Misconduct Bylaw. The work of these committees is supported by several policies and regulations, including the Anti-Plagiarism Policy of 2013. Text matching software,

'Turnitin', is used by the faculty to check for plagiarism, but its deployment is not widespread or consistent across the University as indicated during the interviews. Where it is deployed, staff and students are trained to use the software. There are also regulations governing the conduct of students during examinations and professional conduct violations. The examination regulations have been revised several times, but the professional conduct regulations are from 2006. The number of student disciplinary cases is provided in the SER and has been consistent since 2015, with the exception of 2016, when the number of cases doubled. The effectiveness of the committees that deal with staff and student misconduct is established only through the annual Committee Progress Reports. While data about misconduct cases is recorded, there is no analysis of this data to monitor misconduct cases over time, and to gauge the effectiveness of committees and regulations.

As indicated in the SER, complaints, appeals and grievances are processed 'fairly and with utmost professionalism through the various systems of the University'. The process for handling grade grievances (appeals) is described in the University's Study and Exam Regulations. Other types of appeals related to student dismissals, admission, and course registration are processed by a 'Student Cases Revising Committee', chaired by the VP for Academic Programmes and Graduate Studies. The Panel was provided with samples of academic and non-academic student appeals, which were resolved in a manner consistent with the policies and procedures described in the documentation and using relevant forms. The Student Information System (SIS) enables students to submit grade appeals online, and these are sent electronically by the Deanship of Admission and Registration to relevant committees and staff members for processing. Data on student grievances and appeals is maintained by the Office of the VP for Academic Programmes and Graduate Studies. During the site visit interviews, students were familiar with these regulations.

Overall, UoB demonstrates a strong concern for and commitment to the maintenance of academic standards through its QA system, processes for aligning learning outcomes and assessments, and placement of qualifications on the NQF. There are also processes in place for dealing with staff and student academic misconduct, and records of these are maintained. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

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

Judgement: Not Applicable

As per the SER and the site visit interviews, UoB does not host cross border programmes.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

## Standard 2

### Quality Assurance and Enhancement

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

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

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

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

UoB has a comprehensive QA management system designed to ensure regular review of its services and provisions and to support continuous improvement. The system covers the academic, administrative and support activities and entities. The QAAC Quality Manual contains detailed information about the QA system including lines of responsibility and accountability across UoB. The University also has a University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy, as well as a Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy which provide guidance and support for QA activities at institutional and programme levels.

The QAAC was established in 2009, and is considered to be the 'heart of the QA structure', as it is responsible for the overall management of the University's QA system, and for ensuring that all units satisfy the quality requirements. The QAAC is supported by the QAAEC, which is also called the Quality Assurance Executive Committee (QAEC) in different documents. The Committee is chaired by the QAAC Director and consists of Quality Assurance Office Directors/Coordinators from all the Colleges, as well as expert faculty members and heads of the different QAAC sections. The Committee aims to oversee the QA and accreditation processes at the University, and to monitor and report on various QA operations. Although the QAAC Quality Manual calls for regular meetings of this Committee, the Panel noted that no meetings were held for the first eight months of 2018, while eight meetings were documented recently between September 2018 and February 2019. Issues discussed in these meetings are in line with the Committee's remit, and include the preparation of the Institutional SER.

At the college level, each College has a QA Office Director or Coordinator who reports to the College Dean as well as to the QAAC through their membership on the QAAEC. The QA Office Director/Coordinator has the responsibility of managing the QA activities within the College and supporting capacity building and training activities. Each Department within a College has a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) (formerly known as the Department Accreditation Committee) to manage the QA and accreditation activities in the Department. The QAC is responsible for developing and reviewing the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs), learning outcomes, course portfolios, and assessments, in addition to analysing survey data, writing the programme SERs (as part of the Self-Evaluation process), and implementing improvement plans. Each QAC reports to the HoD and coordinates its QA activities with the QA Office at college level.

At the programme level, there are two QA committees that are managed by the QAC. These are the PACs and SACs, which provide input into PEOs, learning outcomes and other student-related activities for the purposes of quality enhancement. The Panel viewed the minutes of meetings of the PACs and SACs from different programmes, which included suggestions/action plans for improvement in programme design and delivery. The Panel was informed during interviews that the PACs and SACs meet on an annual basis to provide feedback to the University, and that this feedback is taken seriously and used to inform programme design and delivery. The Panel also heard about a number of changes made based on this feedback.

Different mechanisms are used to support the deployment of the QA system, including Programme Annual SERs that document improvement action plans; periodic Programme Reviews; a range of surveys, including course evaluations; and benchmarking activities (see Indicator 8). Despite the University's commitment to assure the quality of all its programmes and activities, the Panel found during the interviews, variations and inconsistencies in QA practices across the Colleges and Departments at UoB. For example, the Panel heard different views about the frequency of programme reviews and asked for review reports for all programmes reviewed in the last three years, but received only internal QA review reports for three programmes. Also, there is a lack of clarity surrounding the surveys conducted by the QAAC with the information in the QAAC Survey Procedure at odds with the information the Panel received regarding the types of surveys conducted. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement mechanisms to ensure consistent implementation and monitoring of the QA system across the University.

In terms of the QA of the administrative entities at the University, UoB has an Internal Audit Office which, as part of its role and responsibilities, reviews all academic and administrative entities for compliance. The Internal Audit Office prepares its annual audit plan in December, and sends it to the President of the University for feedback before seeking approval from the Audit Committee. Each year, certain units and entities at UoB are subjected to an internal audit, with the internal audit reports sent to the Audit Committee and then to the BoT every three months. The Panel found evidence of improvements made in response to the Internal Audit Office recommendations.

UoB has a range of policies, procedures and regulations that are applicable to various functions and activities at the University. All these documents are available on the website in a single repository and can be accessed and downloaded by internal and external stakeholders. The policies and regulations are available in Arabic and/or English. There is also a System for Proposing, Reviewing and Developing Policies which came into effect in 2015 and was due for review in March 2018. The System references a policy review schedule to be maintained by the University Secretariat and reported to the University Council on an annual basis. The Panel was provided with a schedule for reviewing the University's by-laws, systems and policies. This schedule did not have a date of approval nor the name of the approving committee/council. It shows that 24 policy documents are scheduled for review in 2020, including the System for Proposing, Reviewing and Developing Policies, and some documents are shown as being reviewed 'as needed'. The Panel recommends that the University should ensure that its policies, procedures and regulations are regularly reviewed in line with the System for Proposing, Reviewing and Developing Policies to ensure that they are current, relevant and appropriate.

As noted in the SER, although UoB is a self-regulated institution, it was accredited by the HEC in 2016 and re-accredited by the follow-up accreditation visit in 2018. The recent accreditation and re-accreditation of UoB by the HEC in 2018 indicate that compliance was achieved.

QAAC runs different workshops to increase awareness about the role of QA, and train staff on QA activities. The University is planning to provide information desks at different locations to improve the dissemination of information and publications to a variety of stakeholders. However, no timeline is indicated for implementing this plan. A survey was conducted in 2015/2016 to assess staff awareness of the QA policies and manuals. The results of the survey showed that, at that time, 76% of academic staff and 68% of administrative staff were aware of QA policies, with approximately 50% of academic and administrative staff indicating that these policies were useful to their work. The Panel also found that academic and administrative staff are aware of their role in QA.

Overall, UoB has a comprehensive QA management system that covers the academic and administrative operations of the University with clear lines of responsibility. The Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Develop and implement mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and consistent implementation of the University's QA system.
- Ensure that the University's policies, procedures and regulations are regularly reviewed in line with the System for Proposing, Reviewing and Developing Policies to ensure that they are current, relevant and appropriate.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

As per the SER, UoB is committed to benchmarking its activities as a tool for continuous quality improvement, and to ensure that its performance and academic standards are comparable to national and international standards. The University has a Benchmarking Policy that came into effect in 2015 and aims to provide a more systematic approach to benchmarking. The policy outlines the benchmarking principles and the process/procedures to be followed including 'identifying areas for improvement, gathering appropriate information to enable comparisons and selecting benchmarking indicators'. Interviews with faculty members indicated that benchmarking is conducted against regional and international institutions that have a good reputation (e.g. regional accredited universities and international universities identified through ranking systems). Benchmarking is done either through desktop analysis or a formal process. The Panel was also informed that, at institutional level, the decision about which benchmarking activities to conduct is made by the President.

Benchmarking at UoB is primarily used at the programme level and forms part of the programme development requirements. The regulations for offering/developing academic programmes and courses

require benchmarking any new academic programme against 'similar programmes at regional and international prestigious universities' and clarification is required from the concerned Department if the benchmarking is not done. The SER states that a number of UoB programmes has been accredited/recognised by professional bodies (including ABET, AACSB, American Bar Association, Canadian Society for Chemistry, National Architecture Accrediting Board, National Institute of Education), and this would also involve benchmarking the University's programmes against the requirements of these professional bodies. The Panel found evidence of programme benchmarking in practice with similar regional and international programmes. The Panel was informed during interviews that programme benchmarking is also undertaken against professional standards to prepare the programmes for professional accreditation and/or against professional requirements, to enable students to graduate with a professional certificate (e.g. Computer Information System Company, CISCO). Programme benchmarking usually involves comparing course titles, credit hours assigned to courses, and course outlines, but does not involve assessment benchmarking. The Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy encourages benchmarking of CILOs and the SER states 'changes to programs and courses need to be justified by benchmarking'. The Panel noted that benchmarking is done at course level. However, there was no evidence that benchmarking is consistently used at programme and course levels across the University, and there is a reliance on the use of benchmarking only when developing new programmes and seeking professional accreditation rather than using benchmarking as part of the QA processes of continuous enhancement and improvement. The Panel recommends that the University should ensure that benchmarking is consistently and regularly used as part of the QA processes of enhancement and improvement.

In addition to the benchmarking of academic programmes, the Panel confirmed during interviews that the University conducts benchmarking activities for some of its other core operations. External benchmarking of the Library provides examples of how its services compare with other libraries. There is also evidence of benchmarking of admission services and benchmarking of health and safety. A recent benchmarking at institutional level was also conducted with two regional universities; King Fahad University of Petroleum & Minerals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Sultan Qaboos University, Sultanate of Oman. The benchmarking activity was conducted in January 2019 and covered 21 of the 25 BQA Institutional Review indicators, which are applicable to UoB. The only suggestion that resulted from this activity, as included in the report, was to 'encourage the University to increase the number of graduate students and post-graduate offerings to increase the number of intellectual and research publication contributions at the University'. The Panel learned during interviews that this benchmarking activity showed that the number of citations of faculty members' publications at UoB was benchmarked with the two aforementioned universities and found to be low.

There are various surveys at UoB which are conducted with different stakeholder groups across and outside the University to inform development and improvement of services and facilities. The Survey Procedure refers to four main QAAC surveys: Senior Exit Survey, Alumni Survey, Faculty Survey, and Employer Survey. These surveys are administered and managed by the QAAC through its website and are analysed through the Assessment Information Management System (AIMS). Some units, such as the Library, IT Centre Help Desk, Deanship of Student Affairs and Human Resources (HR) Department conduct their own surveys, which are not part of the QAAC Survey Procedure, and certain surveys are

aimed at specific groups of stakeholders (e.g. students with disabilities). Recently, the University introduced an employee exit survey to better understand the experience of retiring or leaving faculty members. Results and analysis of this survey were issued by the QAAC in March 2019.

The Panel examined key surveys conducted during the last three years, and found that the frequency of conducting some of the surveys (such as the faculty survey and the senior exit survey) is less than what is specified in the Survey Procedure and in other documents provided by UoB. In response to the Panel's request for evidence of action plans developed and improvements made on the basis of survey results, the University provided evidence showing opportunities/recommendations for improvements and action plans developed by the QAAC, College of Business Administration, Library and HR Department. Evidence indicates that survey outcomes are discussed by the academic Departments, and some improvements are recommended, generally based on students' feedback, including suggestions for improving certain student services. However, the Panel notes that the design of some surveys needs to be reviewed, as questions seem to focus on data collection rather than seeking feedback for improvement (see Indicator 20), or the scope of the questions is limited (see Indicator 21). In addition, the Panel notes that the Transformation Plan has set a target of 85% for the indicator 'employers satisfaction with graduates', by 2021. However, the 2019 progress report does not have any figures for this indicator for the years 2017 and 2018. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should ensure the consistency and regularity of monitoring the effectiveness of the provisions and services across the University using appropriate surveys and other relevant mechanisms. The Panel also notes that there is lack of evidence that the University systematically follows up on action plans, which are based on stakeholders' feedback to ensure an effective provision. The Panel recommends that the University should systematically follow up on action plans, which are based on stakeholders' feedback, and monitor their effectiveness in meeting stakeholder needs.

Overall, the Panel found evidence that benchmarking and survey results are used to inform improvements of the University's provisions and practices. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Ensure that benchmarking is consistently and regularly used as part of the QA processes of enhancement and improvement.
- Ensure the consistency and regularity of monitoring the effectiveness of the provisions and services across the University using appropriate surveys and other relevant mechanisms.
- Systematically follow up on the implementation of action plans, which are based on stakeholders' feedback, and monitor their effectiveness in meeting their stakeholder needs.

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

The responsibility for maintaining the personal and academic records of students lies with the Deanship of Administration and Registration, along with the Information Technology (IT) Centre, which provides the IT infrastructure required for this purpose. The SIS of the University was demonstrated to the Panel during the site visit. It consists of various modules that can be accessed by different stakeholders depending on the authentication level and access rights they have been assigned. The access records are 'regularly audited to ensure compliance'. This is done by the Deanship of Administration and Registration and the Internal Audit Office. The latter has a process to review the academic records of students to ensure that there are no mistakes in entering grades. During interviews, the Panel learned about how the data entry process is implemented to ensure the accuracy, integrity, confidentiality and protection of the student records, including enrolments and grades. The IT Centre is responsible for maintaining electronic data backups. It has a risk management plan for electronic backup (both full back up and transactional backup) and for the recovery of data.

The mechanism for issuing award certificates involves coordination between a number of entities and individuals, including the Deanship of Admission and Registration, academic advisors, HoDs, the Directorate of Registration, College Deans, the Directorate of Admission and Graduate Affairs and the University Council, to ensure and maintain the safety and integrity of this process. The Panel was informed of how this process works in practice through separate corroborating interviews with the entities and individuals involved during the site visit. The Panel also learned during interviews that the academic Departments check that students fulfil the requirements and are eligible to graduate before their certificates could be awarded. Certain measures are taken, including date stamps, unique serial numbers, signatures, seals and the use of special paper, to ensure that the integrity of the certificates is preserved. Copies of certificates are uploaded to online archives so that there is an electronic copy of the certificate as well. The Panel confirmed these measures during the site visit.

The University states that there are 'regular reviews' to ensure the integrity of student records and certificates which are carried out by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and the Internal Audit Office. The Panel confirmed this during interviews, and noted that the Internal Audit Office has a process to ensure the authentication of the certificates, while the IT Centre has a register of individuals who have accessed student records related to this process. The Panel also learned that in order to ensure that the existing mechanism for issuing certificates is effective and robust in preventing fraud, the IT Centre performs penetration testing, and that other forms of testing are done through the e-Government. The system is also reviewed by external bodies to ensure that it is secure from possible hacking. The Panel was informed that no instances of fraud related to student records and certificates have been detected to date, and that the system is considered to be secure.

The SER states that the University will use blockchain technology in the near future, to issue certificates, to further reduce the possibility of fraud and counterfeiting. The Panel learned during the site visit that the technical work to issue certificates using block chain technology has already been completed for postgraduate certificates, and the next cohort of students from postgraduate programmes will receive block chain certificates in addition to the traditional certificates. The University is continuing its effort to be able to issue block chain certificates to undergraduate students too.

Overall, the Panel appreciates that UoB has an effective system for student administration and academic records which is maintained by the Deanship of Administration and Registration, with the support of the IT Centre. The system ensures the accuracy of the data entry, and the integrity, confidentiality and protection of the student records. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- None

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

## Standard 3

### Learning Resources, ICT and Infrastructure

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

UoB has six libraries across its three campuses, including a digital library, all of which have substantive print collections and e-resources, in addition to study desks, computers and group study rooms. According to the SER, a large new Engineering library will form part of the new infrastructure developments at the Sakhir campus. During the site visit, the Panel learned that continuous engagement with faculty members and students, and regular surveys, serve as mechanisms to ensure that the University provides effective and adequate library and learning resources to staff and students. The Panel noted during the site visit the positive experiences that undergraduate and postgraduate students have with regard to the services provided by the libraries, including the online access of resources.

All the available library and learning resources are mapped to each College and their respective academic programmes. The faculty members are also actively involved in the process of further developing the library collection. The libraries also conduct quality assessment exercises through local surveys as well as the American Research Libraries' LibQual+ survey, to benchmark with other libraries in the region. Furthermore, the learning resources available in the libraries are introduced to faculty members and students through a series of induction and awareness workshops. According to the SER, the number of students who attended the library induction in 2018 has increased significantly.

UoB conducts an online survey amongst staff and students to monitor and evaluate their satisfaction with the quality of learning resources provided through the libraries, for the purpose of integrating improvements in the library annual operational plan. The evidence provided to the Panel shows that the results from these surveys have been used to improve the library services to students and staff. During the site visit, the Panel toured the main library at the Sakhir Campus, and learned through interviews and from the provided documentation about the extent of the library and learning resource services available for students and staff, the usage of these services by staff and students, and the 24/7 remote access to the digital library.

The Panel appreciates that UoB has a strategic approach to the provision of appropriate library resources for staff and students, with a balance of physical and digital materials supporting all teaching, learning and research activities at the University. The Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- None

### **Indicator 11: ICT**

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

Judgement: Addressed

The objectives of the services provided by the IT Centre at UoB are clearly stated in the Operational Plan of the Centre; its Improvement Plan; and on the University's website. The Panel noted during the site visit and interviews that services provided by the IT Centre are known and communicated across the University, especially through the SIS.

According to the SER, the IT Centre follows an operational plan which includes active disaster recovery plans, planned maintenance, and replacement of physical ICT resources. The Disaster Recovery platform is based on replicating the data to the Disaster Recovery site on daily basis in a secure location. The Panel was informed during the site visit that the Disaster Recovery platform was audited in 2017 by the Internal Audit Unit. Planned maintenance and replacement of physical ICT resources are carried out *via* an annual maintenance contract.

The IT Centre is providing state-of-the-art ICT services and infrastructure to students, faculty and staff members, as detailed in the improvement plan of the Centre and the Digital Smart Campus: ICT Strategic Plan 2016-2020, in which the concept of the Digital Smart Campus is clearly articulated. The Panel learned during the site visit and interviews with staff of the implementation of the Digital Campus Strategy focusing on digital transformation, which includes the movement to cloud infrastructure, improvement of customer support, enhancement and automation of business processes, and enhancement of information management. These initiatives are in line with UoB's mission to use technology as an enabler.

The provision of ICT resources is indicated in the ICT Operational Plan of the IT Centre. The University, through the IT Centre, is utilising the online helpdesk to monitor the satisfaction of staff members, faculty, and students with the ICT services, and provide information systems support. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with examples of how the findings from the online helpdesk led to improvements in ICT services. However, the Panel regards the lack of a comprehensive and holistic user satisfaction survey about ICT services specifically, other than the online helpdesk survey and Student Experience Survey, as a shortcoming, and supports UoB's decision to conduct a more comprehensive user satisfaction survey amongst all the stakeholders, to further improve the information and communications technology services. The Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a comprehensive and holistic user satisfaction survey about ICT services, other than the online helpdesk survey and Student Experience Survey.

During the site visit, the Panel was informed that the University Council has oversight of the strategic governance and management structure to drive change, strategy and policy in the field of ICT, in order to strengthen ICT governance at the University. The Panel noted the reference to a Digital Campus Governing Council in the document on 'The Digital Smart Campus: ICT Strategic Plan 2016-2020'. The Panel also learned during interviews with senior staff that the University is working on implementing Control Objectives for Information and Related Technologies (COBIT). In addition, the Panel learned during the site visit that students and staff find the SIS highly effective and easily accessible. The system

also serves as a management information system that is utilised to record and provide reports to management for planning purposes, and to identify, *inter alia*, at-risk students. The Panel acknowledges that UoB has implemented an SIS, which has enhanced processes related to managing information across the University.

Overall, the Panel is of the view that UoB provides effective and coordinated ICT resources, supported by ICT services and infrastructure, which support student learning and digital transformation across the University. The Panel is, hence, of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Develop and implement a comprehensive and holistic user satisfaction survey about ICT services, other than the online helpdesk survey and Student Experience Survey.

#### **Indicator 12: Infrastructure**

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

The register of all physical infrastructure at UoB is captured in the Sakhir Campus Building list, and registers of the Isa Town and Salmanya campuses. These lists include the University's equipment, which is the responsibility of the Assets Department. The University is planning various new developments, upgrades and renovations in the future. The maintenance of buildings, facilities, and equipment is carried out by the Directorate of Building and Maintenance. The Panel learned during the site visit that planning is conducted before the budget processes of each year to determine the maintenance programme and the scheduled maintenance and upgrades at the University.

The provision of classrooms, tutorial spaces, library resources, and amenities is recorded and registered in the SIS and various databases. The SER indicates that classrooms, laboratories, including specialised laboratories, and workshops are adequately equipped for the academic programmes offered. The Panel was informed during the site visit that specific measures are used to determine if these facilities are sufficient (e.g. m<sup>2</sup>/student for a specific academic intervention). The Panel toured the Sakhir Campus and found it generally impressive and conducive for teaching and learning.

UoB has a number of specialised laboratories for teaching and research. The Panel had the opportunity to tour some of these laboratories during the site visit, including the renewable energy initiatives, and laboratories for various academic programmes, and found these laboratories well-equipped and maintained, and fully utilised by students. The Panel notes the University's drive to enhance sustainability in order to improve the quality of life and the environment, and to reduce its carbon footprint. The Panel appreciates that UoB has strategic initiatives to enhance sustainability, including the Renewable Energy Laboratory, which is supporting the national priorities of the Kingdom of Bahrain to improve the quality of life and the environment, and reduce its carbon footprint, as well as promote research collaboration with international academic partners like the UI Green Metric World University Ranking.

Rules and regulations for occupational health and safety are implemented by the Safety and Security Department at the University to provide students, faculties, staff members and visitors with the necessary training, tools, and equipment to protect individuals from any possible dangers, and to maintain safety and security across all campuses. Furthermore, each College has a safety and security representative with clearly stated roles and responsibilities. The Panel was informed during the site visit and noted from the supporting documents, that regular health and safety audits are conducted at the University, and that laboratory users undergo a safety orientation before usage of laboratory equipment. Various interventions were implemented, *inter alia*, training by Ministry of Interior and First Aid, and fire and safety drills by the Department of Civil Defence at the Ministry of Interior, to ensure compliance with the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Panel also learned during the site visit that the Health and Safety Programme will serve as the regulating document/policy for occupational health and safety.

The University monitors stakeholder satisfaction with its infrastructure through specific questions in its existing surveys, including the Student Exit Survey, Course Evaluation Survey, and Students' Experience Survey. The Panel was informed during the site visit of improvements that followed from these surveys. The Panel is also satisfied that UoB has a sufficient physical infrastructure that is safe, and adequate to support its students and staff in conducting research. Thus, the Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

## Standard 4

### The Quality of Teaching and Learning

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

UoB's approach to the development of teaching and learning is enshrined within the University's vision statement, which is to be 'a world-class university that is recognized as a learning, teaching, research and entrepreneurial institution.' This vision is supported through the pillars of the Transformation Plan, one of which focuses directly on teaching and learning. The University's Academic Plan 2016-2021 is an annexe to the Transformation Plan and is appropriate to a higher education institution. The Plan is supported by further policies on: teaching and learning, programme QA; academic regulations; transfer, progression and graduation; study and examination; and a Quality Manual. All policies and strategies are subject to annual progress reporting and a five-year review cycle; although, as noted above (see Indicator 7) the Panel found some inconsistencies in the practical deployment of these reviews. During interviews, the Panel formed the view that there was a commonality of approach to learning and teaching that reflected both the aspirations in the Transformation Plan and the Teaching and Learning Policy, and was clearly guiding the work of academic staff members at all levels. However, the Panel also reflected that more could be done to evidence systematic monitoring and review of the implementation of the Academic Plan, achieving greater clarity as to the achievements made against each objective of this plan (see Indicator 3).

Academic programmes of study operate within a departmental structure that gives clear oversight of academic management, reporting to College Deans. Programmes are overseen, from an academic perspective, by Department Councils, chaired by the HoDs. These councils report to College Councils, which are chaired by the Deans and include all Chairs of Departments as members. Terms of reference for College and Departmental Councils are set out in the articles of the Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999, and these councils set annual objectives and provide progress reports on operational matters, which include a record of attendance. Teaching and learning practices are enhanced through blended learning, supported by the e-Learning Centre and the IT Centre, which provide appropriate technologies to supplement face-to-face teaching and learning. Progress against agreed actions within improvement plans is communicated through the University's Correspondence Management System.

The University's Teaching and Learning Policy was approved in January 2019 and will be reviewed every five years. but the Panel noted that its terms and scope are comprehensive and appropriate for the nature of the programmes offered by UoB. In interviews with senior management, staff and students, the Panel understood that academic processes were clearly communicated and facilitated the development of an

inclusive and supportive teaching and learning environment. This environment was further enhanced by PACs and SACs, which added to the contextualisation of programme delivery across the University (see Indicator 7).

The Panel understood from interviews that, where opportunities for practicums, or work-based learning are available, these systems are well-managed and supported. There is a balance of activity between opportunities provided directly by employers as a result of direct engagement with the University and those negotiated by the students themselves, with the support of their Department or programme, as indicated during site visit interviews. In all cases, the University ensures that there is appropriate liaison with employers, and support from both University staff and an 'on-site' supervisor. Both students and external stakeholders, met by the Panel, reflected upon the efficacy of this support.

Support for the enhancement of teaching and learning, and the development of the quality of teaching across the University is provided by the Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership (UTEL), which assists all academic staff, from those new to teaching to those who simply wish to continue to develop their skills and develop pedagogically. UTEL courses and activities are mapped against the UK Professional Standards Framework (predominantly at levels 1 and 2 of the Framework), and the University has entered into an accreditation arrangement with Advance HE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) in the UK, to enable successful participants to achieve levels of fellowship that have international standing and recognition. The Panel considers that this reflects sector-leading good practice and appreciates the work of the UTEL in its support of academic staff at all levels, through the implementation of a consistent methodology for the development and accreditation of teaching excellence to international standards, for which the University is to be commended. The University also uses various surveys such as the Senior Exit Survey, Course Evaluation Survey, and Student Experience Survey to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in order to ensure continuous improvement (see Indicator 8).

Overall, the University has developed a consistent approach to the strategic and operational planning of teaching and learning activities. This is enhanced by excellent support for academic staff through UTEL, both in terms of preparation for teaching and in terms of pedagogic development, leading to internationally recognised accreditation. Thus, the Panel is of the view that the University meets the requirements for this Indicator.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

The University publishes comprehensive programme information, both in printed form and on the University's website, which includes requirements for academic achievement and, where appropriate, levels of proficiency in the English language. During interviews with staff, students, and external

stakeholders, the Panel formed the opinion that such matters were clearly understood and communicated. The Panel also learned about the mechanisms in place to check the accuracy of information and to approve marketing materials prior to publication. Benchmarking of the admission requirements and criteria of academic programmes with regional and international universities, and norms as shown in Admission Benchmark Study, is conducted by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and academic Departments. Admission requirements for UoB are published through the e-Government website and within the relevant application forms and documentation. The Deanship of Admission and Registration subscribes to the Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE), to help evaluate certificates and understand education systems of various countries. UoB claims that the Committee for Admission and the Supreme Admission Committee of the University review the admission criteria of academic programmes periodically with consideration of a variety of internal and external information. However, the Panel found little evidence that this review systematically evaluated students' progression and achievement against entry standards, and considers that this aspect could be further strengthened.

Students who do not achieve sufficiently to gain direct admittance to the University (particularly in terms of the English language) can be admitted to the Orientation Programme, which has been designed to improve English language proficiency and IT skills of new students. There are clearly-stated requirements and procedures for course exemptions within the admissions process on the e-Government admissions website. The University also has an internal process for managing transfer between Colleges. The Panel noted that the University is planning to provide students with the opportunity to apply for transfer using the SIS, which is anticipated to improve the transfer process. Applicants for postgraduate studies are supported through the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research and are evaluated across a range of appropriate criteria for the subject and the level of programme applied to.

The Panel further noted that the University views the levels of achievement required for IELTS and TOEFL differently with respect to the requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. While postgraduate applicants are required achieve higher IELTS scores, there is no distinction made within levels of achievement for TOEFL qualifications, where the required level of achievement is 500, irrespective of the level of programme applied to. Furthermore, during interviews, the Panel also learned that some students struggle within numerate disciplines, such as Engineering, despite having achieved the minimum grades required for entry, and that there were some occasional discrepancies between levels of attainment in English language, and overall academic achievement, which inhibit students' success on academic programmes at a later stage. The Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a mechanism to review the general and specific admission criteria and entry standards, so as to ensure they are appropriate, and that students have the relevant proficiency, prior knowledge and skills to succeed in their academic programme of study.

Overall, the University has established clear processes for admission which, despite the need to review some aspects, provide appropriate guidance to applicants and other external stakeholders and support the operation of a fair and consistent process. In this respect, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

## Recommendation

- Develop and implement a mechanism to review the general and specific admission criteria and entry standards, to ensure they are appropriate and that students have the relevant proficiency, prior knowledge and skills to succeed in their academic programme of study.

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

A series of policies, regulations and manuals are in place at the University as mechanisms to ensure that programmes are up-to-date and relevant to the labour market and societal needs. All programmes at the University are designed to clearly articulate the intended learning outcomes, and to be aligned with the University's mission, vision, strategy and aims. Programmes are required to be aligned with Programme Educational Outcomes and PILOs. This articulation is recorded in Programme Specification Templates. Reports on programme approvals are provided to departmental Quality Assurance Committees that, in turn, report to the QAAC.

The Regulation for Offering/Developing Academic Programmes and Courses includes the requirements of the NQF and describes the process of approval for new and revised academic programmes. The academic programmes are designed based on recognized higher education fields of study, and the number and distribution of credit hours are demonstrably in accordance with international norms and the NQF requirements.

The development of new academic programmes and the improvement of existing programmes are guided by the Regulation for Offering/Developing Academic Programmes and Courses, which also describes the roles and responsibilities when developing or improving academic programmes, and the resources and learning materials that should be made available to offer the programme. In interviews, the Panel learned that additional resource needs for new courses are considered as a part of the College budget-setting processes and that, where such needs are reasonable, or within the overall strategic ambitions of the University, they can be accommodated within the existing resources.

The University plans to review academic programmes and courses for QA purposes in accordance with the Programmes Review Plan, with input from various sources. The planned review process operates within a framework which combines annual monitoring followed by a periodic review, undertaken on a cyclical basis. Programme self-review is supported by programme analysis reports that allow for the evaluation of performance and internal benchmarking. The University's Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy notes that the frequency of review 'should be defined' and it was clear to the Panel, through interviews conducted at various levels, that there were different approaches to frequency in place within different Colleges (see also Indicator 7). The Panel advises the University to select acceptable timescales and ensure that these are adopted within all areas of provision. During interviews, the Panel learned about the involvement of external members of PACs in informal reviews of

programmes. The Panel is of the opinion that the University could strengthen this process further by ensuring there are formal records of external involvement in programme reviews.

There is a process in place for mapping CILOs to PILOs using the Course Portfolio Checklist. The University aims to have all qualifications placed within the NQF. However, the Panel noted that the University's plans in this respect are currently presented over an extended timescale until 2024. The Panel encourages the University to reflect upon this to ensure that all programmes achieve placement on the NQF as soon as feasible.

Overall, the University's approach to the approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes is generally robust and clearly understood by both academic management and faculty members. Programme development and review are subject to appropriate external engagement through PACs, and the Panel notes a strong support from employers, professional body representatives and other external stakeholders in terms of their engagement with these activities. Thus, the Panel is of the view that the University meets the requirements of this Indicator.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

UoB has comprehensive policies and procedures for the management of assessment which cover both undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study. Processes are managed between the QAAC and the Deanship of Admission and Registration and reported to the QAAEC, as well as to QA committees, both at University and College levels. As with all policies and procedures of the University, these are subject to periodic reviews. These policies are made available publicly on a dedicated section of the University's website.

Programme and course documentation maps the achievement of PEOs, PILOs, and CILOs, and assessment is mapped against achievement at these levels. The University provides a mapping guide for staff and the QAAC has run training for faculty members on these mapping processes. Assessment strategies are published in Course Specification Forms that map assessment against CILOs. The IDEAS Handbook contains comprehensive guidance on assessment design, goals, types, and principles, while reinforcing responsibility for the development of appropriate assessments at course level, and the integration of course and programme outcomes. The Panel viewed this as a useful document in providing comprehensive guidance to faculty members.

Assessment processes are clear and well-managed, and the Panel learned from both students and staff about the effectiveness of processes for the submission and return of work, the management of presentations and other forms of assessments, and the conducting of examinations. However, while there

are clear procedures in place for moderation, implementation of both internal and external moderation is variable. In particular, external moderation applies to all postgraduate theses, but practices across taught modules are more subject to variation, as indicated during the site visit interviews and the provided evidence. The Panel recommends that the University should ensure that policies for moderation are applied consistently across all programmes against clearly-set expectations of compliance.

Student rights to review marking and appeal against grading are covered within the Assessment Regulations, and there is a standard form for registering the desire to appeal a grade. Staff and students met by the Panel during the site visit clearly understood the process and were generally satisfied with its operation. The University has the stated intention of developing this process further, by integrating it within the SIS. In light of the Panel's view of the efficacy of the SIS, such development is encouraged.

In meetings with staff and students, the Panel formed the view that assessment practices at the University were robust and sound, and well-understood by the concerned parties. There was some evidence of variability of practice, and this should be addressed to ensure consistency and compliance. The Panel is of the view that if the University is able to reduce variability, this would enhance student assessment and moderation processes further. Overall, the Panel is also of the view that the University meets the requirements of this Indicator.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Ensure that policies for moderation are applied consistently across all programmes against clearly-set expectations of compliance.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

As outlined in Indicator 15, UoB has comprehensive processes for the introduction and review of academic programmes that include the definition of PEOs and PILOs. This approach is applied to course design, and assessments are mapped against CILOs. This mapping is recorded in Programme and Course Specifications. Guidance on the development of learning outcomes and the mapping process is provided through the IDEAS Handbook and in direct guidance on outcome mapping.

The University's approach to the development of graduate attributes is subject to some further enquiry, and was not presented coherently to the Panel, either through documentation or in interviews with staff and students. Graduate Attributes are referred to once within the University's SER but there is no formal record of what these are, and how they might be applied to all academic programmes. The IDEAS Handbook lists a set of University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs), which 'are common to many programs at UoB and are proposed as a first set of University Intended Learning Outcomes for UoB.'

These outcomes are: communication; technological competence; critical thinking and analysis, knowledge and skill; information literacy; responsibility and integrity; and life-long learning.

While the Panel was reassured that UoB has gone some way in developing graduate attributes, through the discussion about the implementation of these UILOs, the UILOs were not clearly stated anywhere outside the IDEAS Handbook and had not been communicated effectively to all staff and students. Programme and Course Specification forms made reference to the mapping process, but the outcomes themselves need formal approval and wider dissemination before they can be adopted and effectively implemented in programme delivery. The SER states that 'achievement of these outcomes can be measured through successful student assessment', and the mechanisms exist to ensure this is done. However, this cannot be effectively measured while the UILOs are not universally understood. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should communicate approved UILOs (which reflect graduate attributes) to all stakeholders, and ensure that their successful achievement is monitored across all programmes of study.

In the absence of widely understood UILOs, it should be noted that PEOs provide a level of assurance regarding student achievement at award level and, while these are not common to all programmes, they provide useful information to prospective employers as to what can be expected of graduates. As discussed in Indicators 13 and 14, UoB expresses NQF levels clearly within programme documentation and ensures that there are processes to allow for transfer between awards at the same level, and progression from one level of study to another. These processes are supported by the mapping exercises of CILOs and PILOs.

The University conducts surveys of employers and alumni within its overall survey procedure, operated by the QAAC. There is also a Senior Exit Survey, the outcomes of which feed into improvement plans. The efficacy and appropriateness of intended learning outcomes, at programme and course levels, is also subject to discussion at PAC meetings. In meetings with employers, professional body representatives and other external stakeholders, the Panel learned of the University's responsiveness to external input and willingness to adapt and enhance programmes to ensure they meet the needs of employers and professionals. The University has the stated aim of reviewing outcomes against National Occupational Standards, when these are published.

Overall, the Panel is of the view that the University's approach to the development and implementation of intended learning outcomes is diligent and robust, and well-understood at programme and course level. There is some work still needed to embed UILOs as graduate attributes, and to communicate these to all stakeholders, but there is strong evidence indicating that the University is capable of achieving this and continuing to demonstrate its responsiveness to the external environment. The Panel is, therefore, satisfied that UoB meets the requirements of this Indicator.

#### Recommendation

- Communicate approved University Intended Learning Outcomes (which reflect graduate attributes) to all stakeholders, and ensure that their successful achievement is monitored across all programmes of study.

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

As discussed in Indicator 17, UoB has processes to allow for transfer between awards at the same level, and progression from one level of study to another. While formal learning is recognized by the Institution, the recognition of informal and non-formal learning is pending changes in regulations. Hence the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

Recommendation(s)

- None

### **Indicator 19: Short courses**

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

Judgement: Not applicable

As per the SER and site visit interviews, UoB does not offer short courses currently.

Recommendation(s):

- None

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

## Standard 5

### Student Support Services

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

UoB provides a range of student support services, activities and programmes, through the Deanship of Student Affairs, which are described on the University's website. Moreover, the Guide to Student Rights and Duties provides, amongst others, information regarding the expected student behaviour. The Deanship of Student Affairs provides social, behavioural and psychological guidance to students through the Department of Guidance and Counselling, where 'Each College has a Guidance and Counselling Office to provide required support to students by a qualified counsellor'. The referral of students to the Department of Guidance and Counselling is managed through an appropriate form that includes sections for recording student details and their condition, and there is a follow-up form for student cases. An annual report with a summary of all the cases, statistics and recommendations is also prepared.

UoB has a Disability Division within the students' Services and Development Department of the Deanship of Student Affairs, which caters for students with special needs by providing them with academic support, special consideration during examinations, integration in extracurricular activities, special transportation as well as ensuring ease of access to the premises for students with physical disabilities. The Students with Disabilities Guide clarifies the services provided to students with special needs and defines the conditions that are eligible for receiving these services, which encompass physical, vision and hearing impairments, and temporary and long-term illness. Students with special needs have to register with the Division in order to receive these services. By completing a form, students with special needs may request other services, such as extending the assessment time and gaining access to the campus through the main gate. Moreover, the Disability Division keeps track of special needs' students, and reports on their numbers per College and needs category. In addition, there is a Physio-Braille laboratory for visually-impaired students at the College of Arts. The Panel was informed that all students could use the Physio-Braille laboratory, which provides text to Braille or text to sound services, as well as making arrangements for volunteers to read out examination papers to students with visual difficulties. During the site visit, the Panel was able to confirm that UoB ensures ease of access to its premises for students with physical disabilities through access ramps at building entrances and elevators in multi-storey buildings. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the services provided by UoB for students with special needs.

Healthcare clinics on each campus provide medical and health-related services such as general medicine, minor surgical procedures, maternity services, immunisations, and emergency services.

During the site visit, the Panel was informed that annual reports are sent to the VP for Information Technology, Administration and Finance on the number of incoming patients and their medical conditions. Also, UoB 'has signed an agreement with a third-party healthcare agency to supply the University with qualified healthcare staff members', supplying five nurses over the period from 2017 to 2019. Students interviewed by the Panel during the site visit were satisfied with the services provided by the University's healthcare clinics.

Located under the office of the VP for Community Service and Alumni Affairs, the Career Counselling Office allocates training placements for students and provides them with advice on the job market, as well as general career counselling and a 'Start your own business' forum. The Office also advertises job vacancies, helps students in their résumé development, and conducts career exhibitions where students and graduates meet potential employers. Furthermore, the Office provides career counselling for special needs students. Interviewed students and graduates expressed their satisfaction with the services provided by the Careers Office. They noted that many students had benefited from the services of this Office, and that they receive social media messages from the Office. However, some alumni indicated that UoB does not have strong links with industry in order to help graduates find suitable employment. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the University provides a range of administrative and academic support services that encourage the personal development of students, which include psychological guidance, support for students with disabilities, healthcare services and career counselling.

Newly admitted students are provided with a formal induction day at the beginning of the first semester each year, which is organised by the Deanship of Student Affairs and supported by the academic Departments and the Student Council. Library induction sessions are also conducted, covering available learning resources and the concept of academic integrity, and students are advised on the methods of avoiding plagiarism. Interviewed students and alumni expressed their satisfaction with the student induction process, which provides them with pertinent administrative and academic information. Furthermore, they stated that UoB's website includes relevant administrative information and regulations. Students are also allocated advisors to help them with academic matters, and each undergraduate and postgraduate student is assigned an advisor at the time of enrolment.

According to the SER, students have online access through the SIS to particular information such as the status of their enrolment, grades, Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA), transcripts, attendance, and schedules. During the site visit, the Panel confirmed the availability of the aforementioned information, and noted that the SIS also provides online payment facilities, attendance information, course registration and withdrawal procedures. Moreover, students can access their academic plan and performance through the SIS, which enables them to know ahead of time their planned courses and pending courses for completing the programme. During the site visit, students indicated their satisfaction with the services provided in general, as indicated earlier in this Indicator. However, a number of students were not satisfied with the support they receive from the Registration Department. The Panel encourages the University to monitor the effectiveness of the student registration processes.

The Deanship of Student Affairs offers a large variety of opportunities for students to engage in extracurricular activities through workshops on leadership, research, information technology, and examination preparation, field trips, as well as coordinating activities for student societies and clubs.

These include awareness programmes, exhibitions, sporting events and industry visits. The Student Clubs Bylaws state that student clubs may be established to serve the purpose of developing student hobbies and special interests in various cultural activities, as well as to encourage volunteering work. Moreover, the Bylaws state how the clubs should be structured and operated. In addition, the Students Societies Bylaw regulates the work of student scientific societies, which are discipline-based and college-bound, and have the aim of encouraging extracurricular activities that are subject-related, innovative and multidisciplinary. The Department of Student Services organises the UoB Youth Delegation Programme, which aims to provide students with specialised training through field visits.

Evidence indicates that the Deanship of Student Affairs plans for the student activities annually. During the site visit, the Panel confirmed that students engage in a variety of extracurricular activities through the student clubs and societies, including competitions. Interviewed students indicated that the University provides funding for their participation while many of the supported activities are proposed by the students themselves. The Panel appreciates that UoB plans and provides students with a wide range of opportunities to engage in social, recreational, sports, cultural and scientific activities that help develop students to be well-rounded individuals.

UoB monitors student satisfaction by conducting several surveys such as the annual Senior Exit Survey and the Student Experience Survey to get feedback on the student experience with support services at the University. In addition, the library survey results are used to monitor the library learning environment. The quality of services provided for students with special needs is also monitored through a survey. However, a report on the special needs survey outcomes and Senior Exit Survey reports raised several issues that the students were not satisfied with, such as the re-registration processes. Also, '46.2% of the senior exit students were dissatisfied with the career counselling services' and 'the advising system was rated with a satisfaction level lower than 60% for the last 5 cohorts of graduating seniors'. SAC meeting minutes indicated that some advisors are not knowledgeable about the study plans and students do not benefit from their advising visits. Furthermore, although students confirmed to the Panel that their opinions on support services are regularly taken during interviews, they were not aware of any improvements being implemented based on the feedback they provide and were dissatisfied with the attention given to their concerns, especially that some of these concerns were repeated over a number of semesters. Moreover, alumni indicated that the University does not systematically seek their feedback, and a number of alumni noted that they have not been contacted at any stage after graduating. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should implement measures to ensure the effective provision of student services, and provide feedback to the students on the implemented improvements based on their feedback.

According to the SER, the Deanship of Student Affairs conducts a number of tutorials, programmes, and events, and provides academic guidance and additional support courses to improve students' academic achievement. In addition, the Deanship facilitates a Peer Teaching Programme whereby selected student volunteers provide tutorials and advice to their peers in their subject areas. Case details are recorded and an annual report is submitted to the Dean of Student Affairs by the Students' Services and Development Department. During the site visit tour and in student interviews, the Panel confirmed that the National Geographic Centre also provides tutorial sessions for all students to help them with coursework and provide them with extra exposure to the English language, grammar and presentation

skills. The Panel notes that the Centre is staffed appropriately and faculty members may volunteer to help students in the Centre. According to the Study and Examination Regulations, students whose CGPA falls below the minimum requirement for graduation (2.0 out of 4.0), are given an academic warning and placed on probation until their CGPA recovers, otherwise they are dismissed after three semesters of being on probation. Moreover, students with a CGPA less than 2.33 out of 4.00 are labelled as 'at risk of academic failure'. According to the SER, the SIS automatically flags at-risk students, and this flag is indicated in the SIS to the student, the Academic Advisor and the HoD. The re-registration of at-risk students is blocked by the SIS, and they have to visit their academic advisors to complete their course registration. Interviewed staff and students confirmed that measures are in place for providing academic advising and identifying at-risk students. However, the Panel noted that the SIS does not generate automatic notifications, such as sending emails, to the Advisor or the student, if their CGPA falls below the requirement, and they have to regularly monitor their status on the SIS. The Chair does not receive any reports from the SIS on the progress of at-risk students in their Departments. It is up to the individual academic advisor to monitor a student's status on a regular basis, and to provide appropriate advice. Furthermore, there is no evidence of follow-up to ensure the effectiveness of the academic advising system, and that the Advisor completes the advising progress forms available on the SIS. As noted earlier, students had expressed their dissatisfaction with their advisors in a number of surveys, and noted that they do not provide the academic support they need during their studies. The Panel recommends that the University should implement measures to support students at risk of academic failure, and enhance the academic advising.

Overall, the Panel is satisfied that UoB provides a range of student administrative and academic support services and that these are delivered *via* qualified and dedicated staff who are guided by documented policies and procedures. Hence, the Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Implement measures to ensure the effective provision of student services, and to provide feedback to the students on the implemented improvements based on their feedback.
- Implement measures to support students at risk of academic failure and enhance the academic advising.

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

## Standard 6

### Human Resources Management

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

UoB's mission emphasises leading edge teaching and research with regional impact. To achieve its mission, UoB has recognised the importance of human capital, and has positioned 'Leading Edge Human Capital' as the second pillar of its Transformation Plan 2016-2021. Moreover, UoB has recognised that it has to support its own human capital by providing them with professional development (PD) and digital literacy, and recruit faculty with good research outputs in order for its human capital to deliver its mission. This is reflected in the HR Strategy 2018-2021 which defines three aims covering compliance with the rules and regulations of the Kingdom of Bahrain aided with unified IT solutions, attracting high calibre staff, and developing recruitment policies that support research. The Directorate of HR at UoB works under the supervisory umbrella of the CSB, and all recruitments must comply with the CSB's requirements. During interviews the Panel was informed that faculty vacancies are advertised by the Directorate of HR. The Department Council forwards the details of selected candidates to the College Council, then to the University Council for approval. The CSB is also involved to ensure compliance with its regulations.

The appointment and responsibilities of senior level staff are governed by the Amiri Decrees of 1986 and 1999. The President is appointed by a Royal Decree to serve a four-year term. Vice-Presidents and Deans are appointed by the BoT, while HoDs, and unit directors and coordinators are appointed by the President, with the terms of appointment dependent on the position. According to the SER, the University Council is the authority for establishing administrative positions and for reviewing policies and regulations related to recruitment and promotion, and according to the Quality Manual, the Dean 'oversees all personnel matters involving academic and non-academic employees' within the College.

UoB has defined KPIs in its HR Strategy 2018-2021 which include staff retention, age, nationality profile, number of participations in PD per faculty member, promotions, ensuring equal opportunities between genders and number of job announcements. The 2018 Achievement and Progress Report for the University's Transformation Plan highlights the KPIs for the strategic pillars in 2016, 2017 and 2018, including the HR KPIs. However, the report does not indicate how the University fulfils its HR requirements to achieve its mission and does not report on current or future HR requirements and needs.

Staff retention is monitored by the Directorate of HR and shows that the overall university staff retention in 2018 was very high (>90%) and the lowest retention was in the College of Applied Studies (85%). In 2018, 28 faculty members applied for promotion, and 11 of them were recently promoted. In addition, 19 faculty members as well as 22 administrative staff were promoted as the result of them reaching the end of their service, while 20 other administrative staff members were promoted to the next salary scale. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that the Promotion Policy is well-communicated, and consistently implemented, and that faculty members are satisfied with the promotion criteria which reflect faculty achievements.

According to the SER, academic workload for faculty members is defined by the University Bylaws, where weekly working hours are set to 40 hours. PhD holders teaching load is specified as either 12 credit hours or 15 contact hours. Non-PhD holders teaching load is specified at 15 credit hours or 18 contact hours. The remaining working hours for faculty members are assigned by the HoD, and include time for research, advising and office hours. However, the Panel notes that non-PhD holders are assigned from five to seven courses per semester, which may exceed the teaching load specified in the Bylaws. Moreover, the 2017 faculty survey indicates that the average number of credits taught by faculty is high (14.29) compared to the University policy of 12 credits, and recommended that the University should 'devote more resources to bring in qualified teachers, to reduce the load of teaching from existing faculties'. The UoB Analysis Report 2016, refers to high and unequal workloads (due to teaching loads, membership on committees, QA procedures and administrative work), difficulty in attracting high calibre staff, and high student to faculty ratios. Moreover, other reports as well as the SAC minutes indicated that urgent attention needs to be given to the high faculty loads. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that staff shortages still persist, and faculty members are dissatisfied with the high teaching and administrative workload, which does not allow them sufficient/enough time to conduct research and other activities to ensure that their knowledge remains current.

Furthermore, the Panel notes that the University's annual budget has been reduced from BD 48.5 million in 2014, to BD 42.5 million in 2018 (-12.5%), whilst the number of faculty in the Colleges has declined since 2014, compared to 2018, by approximately 10%. Concurrently, the number of students enrolled in most Colleges increased by approximately 30%, leading to a high student to faculty ratio. Furthermore, the Annual HR Report 2018 indicates that more than one third of the faculty are employed on part-time basis to teach University courses, while there was a large number of vacant staff positions at the University. Even though the University's Operational Plan indicates under Aim 1.5.1 that a five-year plan should be developed for meeting the urgent growing need for recruiting more faculty, UoB has not proposed or adopted any measures to implement this, and the Panel was informed that the final decision remains with the CSB. The Panel is of the view that the University needs to urgently mitigate the challenges leading to the prevailing academic staff shortages in order to maintain academic standards and teaching quality. The Panel recommends that the University should prioritise the implementation of long-term HR planning to ensure that employed academic staff are sufficient in number to fully support the ambition of the Transformation Plan.

UoB keeps staff records on several platforms. According to the SER, the College of Business Administration has implemented the web database program, SEDONA, to record the details of its faculty members, their workload, research and other programme information, which was corroborated

by the Panel during interviews. The Panel was also informed that the Directorate of HR currently keeps hard copies of staff records and is in the process of migrating these records to the electronic HR system (Horizon) of the CSB. During the site visit, the Panel was shown the electronic platforms for keeping staff records, which fulfil the University's record keeping requirements for staff.

According to the SER, new full-time and part-time faculty members are introduced to the University by attending an induction workshop conducted by the Administrative Training Office, and a 'New to University Teaching in Bahrain' workshop conducted by the UTEL. In addition to this, a number of other workshops are offered that are useful for newly recruited faculty members. A very recent University Council decision (dated 27 February 2019) was provided to the Panel, informing all College Deans that the College QA Office will be responsible for the induction of newly appointed part-time staff.

During interviews, however, the Panel found little awareness amongst staff about the formal induction programmes for full-time or part-time faculty or administrative staff. The Panel was informed that peers provide guidance to newly recruited staff and that the University provides them with the rules and regulations on a CD. Moreover, UoB does not have any documented policies or procedures for staff induction, and records of staff participation and satisfaction with the induction programmes are not kept. The Panel recommends that the University should introduce a formal induction for all staff members, evaluate its effectiveness, and involve the Directorate of HR in collaboration with the direct department where the staff member would be working.

There are separate disciplinary committees for faculty and the administrative staff members, which are formed according to the University's staff Bylaws, including the Academic Members First Instance Committee, and the Staff Members First Instance Committee. Committee regulations are benchmarked with government regulations and are available on UoB's website, while updates are sent to staff through the internal messaging system. However, the Panel found that no disciplinary cases were discussed by these committees during the academic year 2018-2019. There are also separate Academic and Staff Members Appeal Committees that faculty and administrative staff can refer to in case of formal requests for redress, which are guided by the University's Bylaws. In cases of complaints, faculty and administrative staff can refer to their respective grievance committees, which are formed at the University level and have approved Terms of Reference. The Panel found evidence of regular meetings of these committees, during which grievance cases of both staff and faculty members were discussed. The Panel was presented with information about six grievance cases for administrative staff, and seven cases for faculty members, which included case descriptions and decisions reached in each case. The Panel found that staff were generally aware of the steps that they have to take in case of a grievance. The recommendations of the grievance committee are forwarded to the President and the CSB, and outcomes are communicated by the Directorate of HR to the concerned staff member. The Panel is satisfied that there is a process for addressing staff grievances and notes that staff are satisfied with the measures put in place by the University for dealing with their complaints and grievances.

According to the SER, the University conducts surveys to measure the satisfaction of staff with the services provided by the Directorate of HR and to reflect on their experiences at the University before retiring or exiting the University. During interviews, however, the Panel was informed that the University has not implemented the faculty and employee exit surveys in all its Colleges and these can

be considered relatively new in implementation. Interviewed staff confirmed their participation in recent staff and faculty satisfaction surveys. The Panel was provided with evidence of the results of a recent faculty survey, which aimed to measure faculty satisfaction with the services provided on campus, PD opportunities and staff workloads. The Panel noted that the majority of faculty indicated that they have attended between one and five PD opportunities and conferences in 2018, however there is low satisfaction amongst faculty with the support provided for research. The results of a recent employee exit survey were also provided to the Panel, which mainly cover information about the participants, their reasons for leaving and what their views were on their work experience at UoB. Furthermore, a faculty survey conducted in 2017 was provided to the Panel, and included sections on workload, work environment, support services and teaching and learning support. The results of a staff survey conducted in 2018 on the quality of services provided by the Directorate of HR showed that the vast majority of the comments raised by the 206 respondents were related to their dissatisfaction with the performance of the Directorate of HR. No evidence was available that improvements were implemented in response to the faculty feedback. The Panel recommends that the University should systematically conduct staff satisfaction and exit surveys, and expand their scope to cover a range of services, and suggestions, and utilise these surveys to inform and implement improvements so that the University can benefit accordingly.

Overall, the Panel is satisfied that UoB has an appropriate HR strategy for recruitment, promotion and performance management of staff members, and HR policies and procedures in place to achieve its mission. The Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- Prioritize the implementation of the long-term HR planning to ensure that employed academic staff are sufficient in number to fully support the ambition of the Transformation Plan.
- Introduce a formal induction for all new full-time and part-time staff members, and evaluate its effectiveness.
- Systematically conduct staff satisfaction and exit surveys, and expand their scope to cover a range of services, and suggestions, and utilize these surveys to inform and implement improvements so that the University can benefit accordingly.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

UoB has recognised the importance of its human capital by setting it as the second pillar of its Transformation Plan 2016-2021, and as the first element of its objectives in the earlier 2009-2014 Strategic Plan. Accordingly, UoB has identified the provision of PD for its faculty as one of the means for accomplishing its mission. The University's SWOT analysis in April 2016 identified that 'Teaching (at UoB) is very old fashioned' and the introduction of 'a unit that supports teaching excellence' was recommended. UoB has set targets that 70% of its faculty members should complete an accredited

programme in professional practice by 2021, and the 2019 progress report indicates that 24% has been achieved by 2018.

As stated in Indicator 14, to achieve its teaching excellence objective, UoB established the UTEL in August 2016. UTEL has a clear mission that focuses on improving the teaching and leadership skills of all faculty members at UoB. The Panel noted that UTEL has a clear annual operational plan that covers its activities, aims, outcomes to be achieved, and KPIs, and includes task designations and deadlines. The QAAC uses the percentage of faculty members attending UTEL training as a performance indicator against the human capital pillar of the Transformation Plan. Another training division at the University is the Administrative Training Office (ATO) which is mandated with providing varied training programmes for staff and faculty members with the aim of enhancing their professional performance. As an example, the office conducts capacity building training sessions for HoDs and academic staff to enhance their performance. The Office has documented aims and procedures for meeting its mission and a training needs form on the ATO website to allow University entities to request training programmes for their staff. Participants' feedback is collected and analysed for each workshop conducted by the ATO. Interviewed staff indicated their satisfaction with the training programmes offered by the ATO, which are advertised through internal memos.

The QAAC conducts capacity building workshops to improve awareness on QA and accreditation. It implements checklists to follow up on the completion of QA tasks that include faculty training. The QAAC and the College QA Offices also organise training workshops on the NQF. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that staff were knowledgeable on the requirements of the NQF and that they have received training on that. Workshops conducted by the QAAC are evaluated by the attendees, and statistics are generated for each workshop. Moreover, the Deanship of Research and Graduate Studies provides PD opportunities for faculty in research methods and in addition to other units at the University, hosts academic conferences and seminars that allow faculty to develop professionally in their areas of specialisation. According to the Faculty Guide published on its website, the University sponsors faculty members to attend conferences and provides financial support for faculty to publish papers in conferences and journals. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that the University provides financial support for conference attendance (but has restricted this now somewhat, due to budget constraints), rewards SCOPUS publications financially, and conducts training courses for staff on research methods and how to write proposals to obtain international research funding. The Panel appreciates that there is an institution-wide approach to the PD of staff members, and opportunities are made available for all staff to remain up-to-date in teaching and learning, and administrative areas.

According to the University Bylaws, the performance of faculty members should be evaluated annually by the HoD, and the outcome is to be discussed with the faculty member. A plan should be set to avoid performance shortcomings in the future. A faculty member can be dismissed if poor performance continues for more than two consecutive semesters. During interviews, the Panel was informed that, as part of its performance management system, UoB has implemented an appraisal and annual reporting system, for both faculty and administrative staff, which is linked to the CSB's system. Appraisal forms and performance rubrics are published on the UoB intranet, and include a Self-Development Plan that faculty members have to submit annually. According to the SER, the appraisal process involves the

submission of requirements by the faculty member to the HoD for evaluation, and the HoD then specifies the PD objectives for the faculty member for the upcoming year.

The faculty appraisal system allocates points for Quality of Teaching (30%), Research (30%), University service (20%) and community service (20%). The Panel noted that clear rubrics are defined for the evaluation of performance, which is conducted by the HoD and approved by the College Dean. According to the HR report of 2018, faculty appraisal results indicate that 79% of faculty members have met performance expectations, 18% have exceeded performance expectations, while 3% partially met the expectations and 0.18% needed improvements. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that the University collects information on staff development needs. Evidence also indicates that UTEL regularly seeks feedback from faculty members on their training needs and preferences, which includes the types of training and the preferred time for the delivery. A needs analysis conducted by UTEL indicates that the majority of faculty opted for training on 'Approaches to Curriculum Design' (61%) and preferred the 'first week of semester before classes' (72%) as the delivery period.

Staff satisfaction surveys are also conducted after the training programmes and feedback forms are available to seek the participants' input upon the completion of the workshops conducted by the different providers at the University. UTEL generates reports from the feedback provided by the PD participants, and these indicate that participants are satisfied with the programmes offered by UTEL. The PD programmes offered by UTEL are also independently assessed by external examiners and clear guidelines are provided for this process. Action plans are prepared by UTEL in response to the issues raised by the external examiners and also to the issues raised in the participants' comments. UTEL also submits implementation reports with key deliverables on pre-defined templates to the Strategy and Performance Unit, for monitoring purposes.

Overall, the Panel is satisfied that UoB has a systematic approach to improving the teaching and leadership skills of all faculty members, which, in turn, supports student learning. The Panel is, therefore, of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation(s)

- None

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

## Standard 7

### Research

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

Research at the University is guided by the third pillar on 'Research with National and Regional Impact', within the University's Transformation Plan 2016-2021, the Scientific Research Policy, which is aligned with the National Research Strategy 2014–2024 developed by the HEC, and the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 of the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research. In the Strategic Plan of 2018-2021, the second strategic goal of the Transformation Plan's pillar on research is cascaded into strategic initiatives, sub-strategic aims, mechanisms and procedures, and performance indicators. The Panel learned during the site visit that these performance indicators are monitored through the individual performance plans and appraisals of faculty members.

According to the SER, the research strategy 'is supported by a considerable budget for research'. Various funding instruments exist at the University, and funding processes to provide financial support for researchers, including for a series of research projects that were funded from 2014 to 2018, have been documented. Furthermore, a number of contractual research agreements were signed with local and international partners between 2014 and 2018.

The University places emphasis on the originality of submitted theses, as described in the Thesis Writing Handbook, as well as on scientific authorship and copyright. Moreover, ethics, integrity, health, security and safety are included in the Research Chart, which serves as a policy for the ethical and safe conduct of research. However, the Panel views the absence of a dedicated policy for the ethical and safe conduct of research as a shortcoming. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a policy for the ethical and safe conduct of research, in addition to the Thesis Writing Handbook and Research Chart.

The University offers 'a diverse number of incentives, including rewards, awards, grants and research funding to encourage research', which are guided by various policies and procedures on the awarding of research grants, conference participation, or other incentives to support academic staff. Furthermore, the University has introduced the distinguished researchers' awards, which are conducted every three years, under the patronage of the President of the University. The Panel encourages UoB to introduce similar research awards at college level, too.

The University has a series of research capacity-building opportunities for staff, which are related to developing scientific research and skills development of researchers, as described in Indicator 22. Various resources are provided to promote good research practices, including a subscription to Cabell's blacklist and whitelist, which guide faculty and postgraduate students on the credibility and impact of various journals and conferences; the Research Accelerator initiative; international conferences hosted by UoB; academic journals and databases; and hackathons to encourage multi-disciplinary research, and to improve links with the industry. Capacity-building online seminars are also available for postgraduate students. The success of these research capacity-building opportunities is evident in the increase in the number of scientific papers in recent years.

The University has implemented the second strategic goal of the Transformation Plan's pillar on research, and the Strategic Plan 2018-2021 of the Deanship of Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, for the development and support of research that includes monitoring its research output. Hence, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation

- Develop and implement a policy for the ethical and safe conduct of research, in addition to the Thesis Writing Handbook and Research Chart.

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

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

#### Judgement: Addressed

According to the SER, UoB offers 28 masters' and four doctorate degree programmes. The learning outcomes of the research components of the postgraduate programmes offered by the University are aligned with the PILOs, and CILOs are mapped to assessments. The PILOs and PEOs of postgraduate programmes are also documented. This ensures that research degrees are of an appropriate level for the programme.

The Panel notes that resources are allocated and available for postgraduate students to carry out research as part of their postgraduate programmes, and laboratories are available to conduct research. However, the Panel learned through interviews that research funds for postgraduate students must be secured through their supervisors, which might not be appropriate since there is a perception that the financial support for the research programmes is insufficient. Hence, the Panel suggests that a dedicated portion of the research budget should be earmarked for the allocation of resources for postgraduate students to carry out their research programme, where the application process could be through their supervisors. Students are also provided with a Thesis Writing Handbook and given training on research methods through Moodle.

The University has implemented policies and regulations for the supervision and support of research students, and uses the Postgraduate Student Progress Report to monitor and review the progress of

postgraduate students. The Panel was informed during interviews that postgraduate students receive effective supervision by the faculty members, although no formal feedback mechanisms are in place to regularly obtain student feedback on supervision arrangements. The Panel recommends that the University should develop and implement a mechanism to formally evaluate the effectiveness of its supervision arrangements on a regular basis. The Graduate Studies Policy guides the mechanisms available for the examination of research theses at the University, and the Panel confirmed during interviews with external examiners, researchers, and postgraduate students that rigorous mechanisms are implemented for the examination of research of theses, including the use of appropriately-qualified external examiners.

A range of opportunities are provided for faculty members to enhance their capacity as supervisors through staff development programmes, and the Panel was informed during the site visit that relevant capacity-building workshops are offered to postgraduate students and staff development programmes to faculty staff (see also Indicator 22).

Overall, the Panel concludes that this Indicator is addressed.

#### Recommendation

- Develop and implement a mechanism to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the supervision arrangements on a regular basis.

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

## Standard 8

### Community Engagement

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

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

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

Judgement: Addressed

UoB is mandated by the Amiri Decrees to engage in community activities in Bahrain. This is reflected in the mission of UoB, which emphasises a direct contribution 'to the economic growth and development of Bahrain'. To achieve its mission, UoB has positioned 'Local Engagement' and 'Bahrain's Economic Diversification and Growth' as the fifth and sixth pillars of its Transformation Plan 2016-2021 and mandated the QAAC with the development of academic performance related to community service. UoB has also established the Community Service and Continuous Education Centre which falls under the administration of the VP for Community Service and Alumni Affairs who chairs the Consultative Council for the Centre. The Centre is governed by bylaws and has a clear organisation structure with four divisions: The Continuous Education and the Consultancy units, which are both managed by an academic staff member, as well as the Community Development and Public Relations units, which are managed by administrative staff. The Centre's mandate includes the provision of support to the Colleges in conducting community engagement activities, and linking the University to all sectors of society. It also aims to use the current knowledge at the University to improve national productivity by providing continuous education to the wider community.

The Faculty Members Bylaw specifies community service as part of the duties of faculty members and as a criterion for promotion, which is also reflected in the University's promotion regulations. Community service is also included as a requirement within the appraisal system where faculty members have to fill in their community service achievements in a specific section of the appraisal form. To achieve its objectives and to help its staff meet their aforementioned community service responsibilities, UoB has established a number of entities for interacting with internal and external communities. These include the Confucius Institute, the National Geographic Learning Centre, the e-Learning Centre and the Credit Media Centre.

During the site visit, the Panel confirmed that the University conducts and its students participate in various community activities such as competitions, seminars, consultations, exhibitions and national committees. Examples include the Huawei Competition, the Kaspersky Cup 2017, and Bahrain's Garden Show. UoB also offers many continuing education opportunities and workshops in various subjects and disciplines through the Community Service and Continuous Education Centre. Moreover, interviewed staff and students confirmed the University's involvement in the above activities, and indicated that they also individually participate in community engagement activities on voluntary, self-initiated basis.. Furthermore, interviewed alumni provided several examples of their participation when they were

students, such as ENJAZ, and even after they had graduated, such as financial literacy seminars offered to all UoB students and graduates.

The Panel acknowledges that UoB has identified specific structures with clear mandates for enhancing interaction with internal and external stakeholders, and implements a range and variety of community engagement activities and initiatives that are aligned with its mission. The Panel also notes that the Community Service and Continuous Education Centre publishes training programme schedules and that these can be accessed online through UoB's website. During interviews, the Panel was informed that Excel sheets are used to record details of the workshops conducted, and information such as the details of trainers, and participants is recorded. The Centre's statistics are included in an annual report, which covers the outcomes of the four divisions of the Community Service and Continuous Education Centre. However, the Panel noted the lack of evidence that the Institution collects feedback from stakeholders involved in community engagement in a systematic manner and that stakeholders' feedback is used for improving its community service activities. Hence the Panel recommends that the University should collect feedback from the relevant stakeholders in a systematic manner and use it in improving its community service activities.

According to the SER, 'the success of the Transformation Plan is measured by collecting data and information about the main indicators to measure the performance as described in the Transformation Plan'. Moreover, the QAAC is tasked with monitoring the progress of the Transformation Plan implementation, including the provision of community services. The Panel notes that participants provide feedback through questionnaires at the end of workshops and these records are used to make decisions on which workshops to be repeated based on their popularity as well as the requests received from the outside community. However, there is a lack of evidence on how the effectiveness of the specific activities is ensured, apart from the QAAC providing templates for monitoring the progress of the Transformation Plan with overall objectives and measures of success related to community engagement.

The Panel notes that UoB's Operational Plan includes objectives for engaging with various sectors of the community, such as initiatives for improving career services and entrepreneurship. However, the involvement of the Consultative Council and the four divisions of the Community Service and Continuous Education Centre in any of the long-term or short-term initiatives of the Operational Plan is not evident. The Panel is of the view that community engagement services need to be managed, coordinated and implemented in a more planned and systematic manner to ensure that the University is meeting its strategic goals in this area, and avoids duplication of efforts across different Colleges, Departments and other units. Hence, the Panel recommends that the University should formalize community engagement activities with an overarching plan at the University level, which is linked to the Transformation Plan, and includes targets, measures and KPIs to ensure the effectiveness of these activities.

Overall, the Panel is of the view that this Indicator is addressed.

### Recommendation

- Collect feedback from stakeholders involved in community engagement in a systematic manner and use it in improving community service activities.

- Formalize community engagement activities with an overarching plan at the University level, which is linked to the Transformation Plan, and includes targets, measures and KPIs to ensure the effectiveness of these activities.

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