



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

# Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

## Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies**

**College of Arts**

**University of Bahrain**

**Kingdom of Bahrain**

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

**HC119-C2-R119**

## Table of Contents

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Acronyms.....	2
The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process.....	4
1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme.....	8
2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme.....	13
3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates.....	21
4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance.....	29
5. Conclusion.....	35

## Acronyms

BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DELL	Department of English Language and Literature The Department
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DQAC	Department Quality Assurance Committee
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MAEL	Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualification Framework
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PCAP	Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice
PEO	Programme Educational Objective
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	British Quality Assurance Agency
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre
QAO	Quality Assurance Office
SAC	Student Advisory Committee

SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UILO	University Intended Learning Outcome
UoB	University of Bahrain
UTEL	Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership

## **The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process**

### **A. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework**

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

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

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

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

#### **Indicator 1: The Learning Programme**

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

#### **Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme**

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

#### **Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates**

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

#### **Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**

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

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

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

**Table 1: Criteria for Judgements**

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

## **B. The Programmes-within-College Review Process at the University of Bahrain**

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

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

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

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies based on:

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit.

- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

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

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

### **C. Overview of the College of Arts**

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

### **D. Overview of the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies**

The Department of English Language and Literature offers the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies programme at Sakhair campus. The programme was first offered in 1996. However, enrolment in the programme was suspended between the years 2003 and 2007. The programme was revised and offered again in 2008. The Department of English Language and Literature also offers a Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature programme as well as 15 service courses to various colleges. At the time of the

site visit, the total number of students enrolled in the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies programme was 35, with the total number of graduates since inception being 48. Currently, there are five full-time faculty members, supported by seven administrative staff, contributing to the delivery of the programme.

## E. Summary of Review Judgements

**Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies**

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

## 1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 1.1 UoB has a documented academic framework for developing new programmes and revising current ones. The SER indicates that the Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies (MAEL) programme has a set of educational objectives that are aligned to the Department of English Language and Literature (DELL) mission and the university's strategic goals. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the programme specification had been subject to a number of reviews, and the Panel was provided with amendments to the programme specification that included modified versions of the Programme Educational Objectives (PEOs), as its aims, and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). There are mappings of the PEOs with the PILOs and the University Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs). Moreover, the mission of DELL, being 'the pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning and research in language-related fields and literature' and promoting 'participation in local and global community by developing a global outlook, cultural awareness, and intercultural communication skills', is congruent with the institution's mission of supporting 'leading edge teaching, technology and research with regional impact'. Further, the mission and vision statements along with the programme aims are well-communicated to stakeholders, as evidenced from interview sessions conducted during the site visit and the campus tour. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims are clearly stated, aligned with the mission statements of the University and College, and well-communicated to stakeholders. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that the programme aims do not include explicit reference to the broad purpose of offering the programme and do not describe the professional career that the programme is preparing graduates to achieve. The Panel advises the College to revise the aims and objectives for offering the programme in light of expected professional careers of the graduates.
- 1.2 The MAEL programme curriculum consists of a total number of 36 credits distributed on nine compulsory courses (3 credit hours each) and a nine credit-hours dissertation, which the Panel considers as being compatible with similar regional and international Master of Arts programmes. The programme study plan indicates that the courses are offered in a sequence that provides suitable academic progression. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that no pre-requisites are formally assigned to courses. During interview sessions with faculty members and students, the Panel was informed that students are encouraged by their advisors to follow the study plan and to take no more than nine credits per semester; however, they can take a maximum of 12 credits to ensure suitable progression and workload. Interviewed students confirmed their satisfaction with the programme and indicated that the workload assigned to them is suitable. However, they stated that the programme would benefit from adding elective courses and a work-based learning

component. Hence, the Panel appreciates that the programme study plan is organised to provide academic progression and suitable workload for students. The Panel notes from interviews and submitted evidence that an appropriate balance between theory and practice in the curriculum offerings is not ensured. Most of the courses are theoretical except ENGL 544 and some components in certain courses. Although the programme title is Applied English Studies and PEO number 1 states 'enable students to critically review theories and research in applied English Language studies .....'; yet, there is only one course that directly deals with applied linguistics, which is ENGL 544 (Issues in Applied Linguistics), and most of the course offerings are theoretical rather than applied (See: ENGL 541, ENGL 542, ENGL545, ENGL547, and ENGL548). Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should consider injecting practical aspects into the theoretical courses, in line with the programme objectives.

- 1.3 Course specifications presented to the Panel include the required information relating to the course content, Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and their mapping to the PILOs, as well as information on weekly topics, assessment and teaching methods used. The Panel notes that the course specification document does not always follow the university's Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) format where, in some courses, the weekly topics as well as the teaching and assessment methods are mapped to the PILOs instead of the CILOs. However, the Panel acknowledges that the reviewed course documents contain relevant information on course aims and that the breadth and depth of course contents are generally appropriate with evidence of use of research findings. The weekly distribution of course content is also appropriate. Moreover, the courses of the programme are informally benchmarked against similar courses in regional and international universities. Hence, the Panel appreciates that the breadth and depth of courses are suitable for the programme level with evidence of reference to current research findings. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that in some cases, the course specifications do not reflect the most recent updates in the programme specification (See paragraph 1.4 and 1.5) and that the references and textbooks in a number of courses should be updated such as in ENGL 540, where the textbook was published in 2005, in ENGL 541 and ENGL 547 where the textbooks were published in 2003, and in ENGL 545 where the textbook was published in 1998. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should revise the course specifications to ensure that these follow the QAAC template, the information included is accurate and updated and that the assigned references and text books are current.
- 1.4 The MAEL programme has a set of five PILOs, which were revised and amended recently. The Panel acknowledges that these PILOs are proper for the type and level of the degree awarded, and are appropriately linked to the PEOs, which are linked to the missions of the Department and the Institution. Moreover, the PILOs are written in a specific and measurable way and cover the expected categories of knowledge, specific skills, thinking skills and general & transferable skills. However, the Panel notes that the PILOs and PEOs listed in the SER and in the 'Guide and Course Directory 2017/2018' are different from the

ones submitted in the amendments and are not written in accordance with the standards of writing learning outcomes or in a measurable format, and that there are eight PILOs specified in the SER. Hence, the Panel concludes that the amended PEOs and PILOs were recently introduced and were not adopted earlier in the programme and its courses. The Panel recommends that the College should update all aspects of the programme documentation to reflect the corrected version of the PILOs and to assure meeting the programme's aims and objectives.

- 1.5 Course specifications list the CILOs, which are generally appropriate to the level of the courses and their contents. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that the CILOs are drafted in accordance to Bloom's Taxonomy, and that courses and their CILOs are mapped to Bahrain National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels. The Panel examined samples of course files and noted that while a number of CILOs are proper for the courses and the PILOs they intend to assess, there are certain CILOs which are not measurable as in CILO 4 of ENGL 545 'to have awareness' and the word 'good' in CILO2 could be replaced with a better word that could assess the outcomes. The word 'demonstrate' is mentioned five times in the CILOs of ENGL 540 and the Panel is of the view that more appropriate and different verbs need to be utilised to measure the skills at this course's level. Moreover, mapping of CILOs to PILOs was not updated to reflect the newly revised five PILOs. In addition, the Panel noted an inconsistency in the way CILOs are mapped to PILOs in different courses. For example, in ENGL 543, each CILO is mapped to all the PILOs; in ENGL 545, the CILOs are mapped to PILOs as a single group, not as individual PILOs. Further, the contents of a number of courses are mapped to PILOs instead of CILOs and the assessment is not mapped to the CILOs. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs to ensure that they are adequately mapped with the updated PILOs and that the mapping method is consistent across all courses.
- 1.6 There is a teaching and learning policy at the level of the University, which focuses on student-centred learning and e-learning/blended teaching. However, there is no such policy at the College/Department level, which was confirmed during interviews. According to the SER, the programme adopts a teaching strategy that is based on four principles addressing CILOs and PILOs, interactive teaching, life-long learning skills and reflective teaching. Teaching methods are specified in the majority of course specifications, which include lecturing, presentations, inquiry-based learning, PowerPoint presentations, problem-solving, case-based learning, whole-class discussions and group discussions. Moreover, most course specifications include a number of websites for students to consult and students are provided access to the e-library. However, the same teaching methods are often repeated for each week (e.g. ENGL 543) and the Panel advises that these methods could be more varied to show what is actually occurring in the course. Moreover, in several of the courses reviewed by the Panel, the teaching methods are not mapped to CILOs, but rather to PILOs. Nonetheless, in general, interviews revealed that a variety of

teaching methods are utilised and students are satisfied with the implemented ones. The Panel appreciates that faculty members generally use a variety of delivery methods that are relevant to the aims and level of the courses and appropriate for the programme intended outcomes. Although UoB's teaching and learning strategy encourages the utilization of e-learning platforms that are available in the University, evidence provided indicates that e-learning is not utilised effectively in the delivery of MAEL courses. Moreover, there is a lack of evidence to indicate that current research findings are utilized in selecting or developing teaching methods. The Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement a plan that ensures proper and effective use of e-learning in the delivery of the programme courses.

- 1.7 According to the SER, the programme adopts the University's 'Study and Exam Regulations' as well as the 'Assessment and Moderation Guidelines' that include an appropriate assessment policy, which indicates that student assessment should evaluate the achievement of the learning outcomes. The policy stipulates that 40% of the marks are to be assigned to the final examination or project and the remaining marks are to be distributed on the course work, according to the nature of the course. Moreover, there are 'Higher Studies Regulations' that cover the assessment of postgraduate courses and dissertations, and state that: 'To obtain the Master's Degree, students shall finish all programme hours successfully, with a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of not less than (3.0) out of (4.0), with an accepted thesis or applied project with a B grade or above. A student needs to achieve a B grade to pass a course ...'. Furthermore, there are clear plagiarism and appeal processes; however, while there is evidence of the implementation of the appeal policy, the Panel was not provided with evidence of the implementation of the plagiarism policy (see paragraph 3.3). According to student and faculty interviews, there is satisfaction with the dissemination of assessment policies, which are published on the university website, on Blackboard and in the student handbook. In addition, interviews revealed that students are informed of these procedures on the induction day, and each course syllabus contains a section that explains the assessment procedures. The course specifications include assessment methods and grades' breakdown. Interviews and submitted evidence indicate that both formative and summative assessment procedures are employed in all courses and that students can receive feedback from their instructors during office hours. While there are University policies for assessment moderation, these are not properly implemented in the MAEL courses (see paragraphs 3.5 and 3.6). There is also a policy and procedure for the assessment of the thesis in place. Interviewed students and staff were well-informed about all relevant policies. The Panel appreciates that there is a clear university assessment policy, which is generally appropriate for the type and level of the programme, as it includes formative and summative functions, provides provision for feedback and students' appeals, and is well disseminated to all stakeholders.

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

- The programme aims are clearly stated, aligned with the mission statements of the University and College, and well-communicated to stakeholders.
- The programme study plan is organised to provide academic progression and suitable workload for students.
- The breadth and depth of courses are suitable for the programme level with evidence of reference to current research findings.
- Faculty members generally use a variety of delivery methods that are relevant to the aims and level of the courses and appropriate for the programme intended learning outcomes
- There is a clear university assessment policy, which is generally appropriate for the type and level of the programme, as it includes formative and summative functions, provides provision for feedback and students' appeals, and is well disseminated to all stakeholders.

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

- consider injecting practical aspects into the theoretical courses, in line with the programme objectives
- revise the course specifications to ensure that these follow the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre's template, the information included is accurate and updated, and that the assigned references and text books are current
- update all aspects of the programme documentation to reflect the corrected version of the programme intended learning outcomes and to assure meeting the programme's aims and objectives
- revise the mapping of the course intended learning outcomes to the programme intended learning outcomes, to ensure that they are adequately mapped with the updated programme intended learning outcomes and that the mapping method is consistent across all courses
- develop and implement a plan that ensures a proper and effective use of e-learning in the delivery of the programme courses.

### 1.10 Judgement

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

## 2. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

- 2.1 There is a clear admission policy for the MAEL programme with admission requirements that are appropriate to the level and type of the programme and are comparable to similar universities. The policy is published on the UoB's website and in the 'Higher Studies Regulations' document. At the institutional level, the 'Higher Studies Regulations' document states that the admission requirements are either a 'BA from the University of Bahrain or any other university accredited by the departments concerned.... with a CGPA not below (2.67) out of (4.0)' or a higher studies diploma with a CGPA not below (3.00) out of (4.0). There are also programme specific admission requirements, which include international tests such as TOEFL and IELTS. Students are required to obtain a score of 550 on the paper-based TOEFL or a band score of six on the IELTS. They are also required to pass an interview and a writing test and to provide two recommendations. The Panel appreciates the clear admission policy at the institutional and programme level, which is adequate for the requirements of the programme and is publicly available for the stakeholders. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence to indicate that the admission policy has been benchmarked or periodically reviewed for effectiveness. The Panel urges the College to benchmark its admission policy against similar regional and international programmes, and to review and revise the policy in light of students' performance and feedback (see paragraph 3.2).
- 2.2 The MAEL programme accepts students in accordance with the institutional and programme specific admission requirements stated in paragraph 2.1. In general, the majority of the admitted students are female (80%) and Bahraini nationals (78%), which has been constant over the past three years, although the last intake was less in number. According to the raw data provided, the students' background meets the basic admission criteria, thus, indicating that the admission requirements are strictly applied. However, the Panel notes that there are significant dismissal and withdrawal rates, as well as many enrolled students having CGPAs that are lower than the graduation requirement which is (3.0) out of (4.0). This indicates that the admitted student profile may not be in line with the programme aims or there might be other factors that should be investigated by DELL. However, successful students do complete their courses with high grades. The Panel further notes that there are no apparent mechanisms in place to investigate the reasons for the inadequate students' academic progress in relation to their profile. The Panel recommends that the College should investigate the reasons behind low student progression rates and establish remedial measures for academically struggling students, to ensure appropriate progression in line with the programme aims.

- 2.3 A well-structured hierarchy has been established for the MAEL programme in accordance with the university regulations. The Department Chairperson is responsible for its management, where the responsibilities of the Chairperson are clearly stated in the QAAC Quality Manual. Decisions regarding the MAEL programme are first approved by the Department Higher Studies Committee then by the Department Council, College Council and finally by the University Council as needed. There are department committees related to the management of the programme such as the timetable, curriculum, quality assurance, higher studies, recruitment, research, conference and promotion committees. From interviews and the provided evidence, the Panel established that the organizational structure for the management of the programme is clear, appropriate for the programme needs and facilitates effective communication and decision-making. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the organizational structure and its clear reporting lines with regards to the management of the programme.
- 2.4 At the time of the site visit, there were five full-time faculty members, at the rank of Associate Professor, involved in teaching in the MAEL programme. Four of them are specialized in general/theoretical linguistics and one in translation, which is not a specialisation taught as part of the programme. The Panel notes that these specializations reflect the fact that the programme is being taught by faculty members who are not specialised in the applied field as the programme title implies. Staff teaching load indicates occasions where faculty are assigned to courses that are not directly related to their specialization. Based on the 35 enrolled students in the MAEL programme at the time of the site visit, the student-faculty ratio was 7:1. However, the Panel notes that the actual ratio was rather higher, taking into consideration the fact that the department's faculty were also involved in teaching the Bachelor of Art in English Language and Literature courses, as well as other additional service courses delivered by the Department to other departments and colleges within the University. This resulted in a high number of students being taught by each faculty member at a time, which can reach to over 260. The Panel notes from interviews and provided evidence that the major emphasis in the faculty's workload is on teaching, in addition to other activities such as research, advising, supervision and committees. The required weekly teaching load is 12 credit-hours for PhD holders and 15 for Master degree holders. However, some faculty members teach six undergraduate courses (18 credits) as well as a postgraduate course and supervise two dissertations, which is not in line with UoB's own policy. Also, a number of the interviewed faculty members stated that the high teaching load has a negative impact on their other activities. Interviewed faculty members and their CVs indicate that the majority of the faculty had not published in the last four to five years. Even though the Deanship of Scientific Research provides publishing incentives (grants and financial support), research is impacted by the high teaching load. The Panel acknowledges that the number of faculty is sufficient for the purpose of the MAEL programme. Nonetheless, the actual teaching load of the faculty is too high in light of international standards, thus impacting staff research performance and community engagement, as well as the delivery of the

programme. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that faculty members are assigned to MAEL courses that are within their areas of specialization and should investigate ways of reducing staff teaching load and student-to-faculty ratios, to enable efficient delivery of the programme and allow time for faculty members to conduct research and be involved in community engagement activities.

- 2.5 Staff recruitment policy and procedures are stated in the university's Academic and Administrative Bylaws and in the SER. The Department has a recruitment committee that sends its recommendations, based on need, to the Department Council then to the College Council and the university administration. Moreover, the Panel was informed that faculty appraisal used to be done at times of contract renewal only but recently it is conducted on an annual basis for all staff through an online system. The recently revised annual appraisal covers faculty members' contribution to teaching, research, university and community service and professional development. Furthermore, all faculty members are evaluated by the Chairperson and at the end of each semester, they are also evaluated by the students they teach. The Panel notes that these evaluation mechanisms are aligned with the institutional policy but there is no obvious link between staff appraisal and professional development needs (see paragraph 4.9). Interviewed faculty and provided evidence confirm the adherence to these policies and the Panel notes with appreciation that the criteria and procedures for recruitment and appraisal are appropriate and consistently implemented. Moreover, the staff retention rate for the period 2013-2017 was 88%, owing to a good salary rate and incentives. However, it was noted that, there is no faculty exit survey and no formal induction of newly appointed staff; although, there is a part-time instructor's guide. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should implement systematic and formal arrangements for the induction of newly appointed faculty and suggests the development and implementation of a faculty exit survey. Based on the 'Regulation for Academic Promotion' at UoB, there are clear promotion procedures to be followed with clear promotion criteria, including teaching, research and community service, which are known to faculty. Nonetheless, interviewed faculty confirmed that some of them have been working for many years and they did not apply for promotion. Moreover, during faculty interviews, the Panel noted that there are obstacles to promotion, which include the high teaching load that has a negative impact on research. The Panel urges the College to ensure an academic environment that supports faculty in applying for promotion in line with university policy and programme aims (see paragraph 2.4).
- 2.6 The SER indicates that UoB provides a secure Management Information System (MIS) that covers registration, academic advising, scheduling, student registration, human resources and surveys. Moreover, the Department Chairperson can use the MIS to make scheduling decisions based on student enrolment; conduct staff appraisals; access personal records of students, faculty and administrative staff within the Department; and approve the grades submitted by faculty members. The system facilitates students' mentoring and advising.

Moreover, students can register and drop courses and pay fees online. Staff and student interviews confirmed that the available components of the MIS have a good potential for enabling informed decision making for the Department, the Chairperson, advisors, staff and students. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the availability of the components of the MIS with their potential to support the programme. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that the MIS could provide further reports and that 'more detailed and systematic statistics about students from the registration system' could be obtained to augment the decision-making process within the programme, as identified in the SER. Hence the Panel advises the College to further utilise the MIS to make better informed decisions regarding the programme

- 2.7 UoB has a policy and procedures for ensuring the security of students' and instructors' records and the accuracy of results, which the IT Centre implements in a strict manner. Student records are handled mainly by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and there are various access levels of authorisation implemented with passwords that users have to change on a regular basis. All information is backed up by the IT Centre according to its backup and recovery policy and procedures, with backups being kept on- and off-campus. Furthermore, there is an audit trail of all transactions, which records the approval of the grades and grade changes. Instructors enter their grades electronically and send them to the Chairperson of the Department, who reviews and approves the grades. During the site visit, the Panel was able to confirm that these procedures are consistently and effectively implemented. The Panel notes, with appreciation that policies and procedures to ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results are in place.
- 2.8 According to the SER and the site visit tour, there are a number of classrooms dedicated for the DELL programme. Each of these classrooms is equipped with a data-show projector connected to the internet, a computer, and a whiteboard. There are also well-equipped laboratories, including a special one for the visually impaired. There is a reading laboratory and a functioning interpreting laboratory as well. A teachers' resource room is also available. Moreover, Wi-Fi and email services are available for staff and students. Each faculty member has a separate office that is adequately equipped to enable him to meet and converse with students. The Panel notes that the available facilities viewed during the site visit are adequate for the needs of the programme. However, one of the laboratories has very old computers, which are in need of updating. As to the university's main library, it is well-equipped with physical resources and references that cater for the programme, as well as with multiple study areas. However, the Panel advises the College to provide more updated books related to the programme and although there are special study rooms in the library where students can meet and talk about their academic issues, the Panel suggests that a dedicated seminar room be provided for graduate studies within the Department. The digital library provides access to 150,000 e-books. Students can access these resources on- and off-campus. Moreover, the library has adequate facilities for students and it meets national and international standards. Students praised the library's

facilities, especially the digital library to which they have access from any place. The University also has large halls and auditoriums for classes with a large number of students. DELL staff and students also have access to the facilities of the E-learning Centre, the Bahrain Credit Media Centre, the National Geographic Centre and the Centre for English Language Learning. During interviews, the Panel confirmed that students and staff are satisfied with the library, the facilities and laboratories available for the programme. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the provision of adequate facilities and resources for the programme, including a well-equipped library.

- 2.9 There are arrangements for generating usage reports at the department, college and university levels for a number of services. The Department keeps a record of all faculty who use e-learning facilities, and the e-learning Centre generates usage reports, which indicate that faculty members have fair usages of Blackboard and Moodle. However, the Panel notes that the MAEL programme does not make effective usage of the available e-learning platforms, and the Panel urges the College to ensure that the programme courses further benefit from the available learning management systems and the support provided by the E-learning Centre (see paragraph 1.6). The university's main library maintains a record of the requests of resources and library loans by faculty and students. During the site visit tour, the Panel noticed that a manual borrowing system is used for monitoring the rate of students' borrowing from the reading laboratory and that time-tables are posted in the classrooms and laboratories used by the programme. The Panel acknowledges the available tracking systems, which can generate appropriate usage reports. Nonetheless, there is lack of evidence to prove that information from tracking reports is used to inform decision-making. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should further utilise the information obtained from tracking reports to inform the process of decision-making with regards to the programme.
- 2.10 During the site visit, the Panel noted that appropriate support is provided for students in relation to the library, laboratories and e-learning, both in terms of infrastructure and computing facilities, or human support such as laboratory technicians or specialists within the library. The main library offers training sessions for faculty and students on how to make use of its facilities. There is a special instruction hall in the library for this purpose. The library has facilities as well as support staff to support students in their academic tasks and interviewed students expressed their satisfaction towards the support they receive from them. Zain E-learning Centre provides training and advice related to Blackboard, which is used for providing students with educational materials such as syllabi, slides, previous tests, assignments and grades. The computing laboratories at the Department are supported with a technician who is responsible for running and maintaining them. A special laboratory is dedicated for the visually impaired students and there are smart laboratories with qualified technicians in them for those teaching pronunciation and speech production. There are counselling and guidance services as confirmed by staff and students interviewed during the site visit, which focus on career

counselling, study habits and behavioural issues. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the availability of comprehensive support and guidance services for the students, and that students find them of value.

- 2.11 The Deanship of Student Affairs organizes an induction day annually for the newly admitted students in which they are introduced to the academic programmes. They are also introduced to the university's regulations, facilities, events and students' activities. A Student Handbook is distributed, detailing the available facilities and describing the overarching academic regulations. In addition, the College of Arts conducts another induction day for its students during which new students meet the Dean and the departments' chairpersons. Each chairperson gives a briefing about their department and provides the students with the programme course directory. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the organization of induction days by the University and the College for the newly admitted students. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the induction days and reported that attendance is not tracked in them and that induction is not repeated for students who miss it. The Panel note that MAEL students seldom attend the induction day, as most of them have studied at the UoB and are familiar with the facilities and the programme. From interviews, the Panel learned that questionnaires are distributed among those who attend the induction day to measure its effectiveness but no evidence was provided that the results of the questionnaires were used for improving the induction day. The Panel suggests that the institution tracks attendance of newly admitted students in the induction day and investigates ways to repeat the induction for students who could not attend it. The Panel also suggests that the outcome of the induction day survey be utilized to inform improvements in student induction.
- 2.12 UoB has a formal academic advising policy through which each student is expected to be assigned an academic advisor who is responsible for following up on the student's progress and providing them with academic support. The SER states that faculty members of the MAEL programme rely on an online advising system to monitor and identify at-risk students, who are defined as those with a CGPA below 3.0 or who have more than two courses below a 'B' grade. Information on academic regulations are available in the Student Handbook and on the university website. During the site visit, the Panel was informed that once identified, at-risk students are not allowed to register online without the permission of their advisors, who advise them on how to plan their schedules and select their courses, in order to overcome their difficulties and avoid dismissal. However, evidence provided indicates that there is a significant number of enrolled students having CGPAs that are below the graduation requirement of (3.0) (see paragraph 2.2), and students' interviews revealed that there is no systematic follow-up or monitoring of at-risk students. Moreover, there is no evidence that students with learning challenges are catered for. The Panel acknowledges the online procedure for identifying at-risk students and offering these students some guidance. Nonetheless, the Panel is of the view that at-risk students need to be identified before their CGPAs drop below 3.0, in order to help

them avoid being placed on probation and at risk of facing dismissal. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should investigate ways to provide more effective academic advising and to utilize proactive advising for possible at-risk students, in order to identify them early and to systematically monitor them, so as to ensure their successful academic progress.

2.13 According to the SER, the University provides various informal learning opportunities for students. From interview sessions, the Panel learned that students are engaged in department-sponsored extracurricular activities, such as: symposia to help them present their course projects; faculty-student open discussions; presentations of students' research findings; information literacy training; and an annual drama festival. In addition, the Deanship of Student Affairs occasionally organizes symposia and conferences for all UoB students. Similarly, the Zain E-learning Centre organizes an annual conference to which students are invited and encouraged to attend. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the provided extracurricular opportunities and confirmed the availability of these opportunities. However, the major obstacle in fully benefiting from the available activities lies in the fact that students are employed and have limited time for these activities. The Panel notes, with appreciation, the availability of opportunities for the MAEL students to get involved in extracurricular activities to enhance their learning experience and knowledge.

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

- There is a clear admission policy at the institutional and programme level, which is adequate for the requirements of the programme and is publicly available for the stakeholders.
- There is a clearly stated organization structure with well-defined reporting lines with regards to the management of the programme.
- The criteria and procedures for recruitment and appraisal are appropriate and consistently implemented.
- There is a management information system that includes various components with potential to support the programme.
- There are policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of learners' records and accuracy of results.
- There are adequate facilities and resources for the programme, including a well-equipped library.
- There are comprehensive support and guidance services for the students, and students find them of value.
- There is an induction programme for newly admitted students conducted at both university and college levels.

- The University and the College provide the programme's students with several extracurricular activities to enhance their learning experience and knowledge.

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

- investigate the reasons behind low student progression rates and establish remedial measures for academically struggling students, to ensure appropriate progression in line with the programme aims
- investigate ways of ensuring that faculty members are assigned courses within their areas of specialization and reducing staff teaching load and student-to-faculty ratios, to enable efficient delivery of the programme and allow time for faculty involvement in research and community engagement activities
- implement systematic and formal arrangements for the induction of newly appointed staff
- further utilise the information obtained from tracking reports to inform the process of decision-making with regards to the programme
- investigate ways to provide more effective academic advising and to utilize proactive advising for possible at-risk students, in order to identify them early and to systematically monitor them, so as to ensure their successful academic progress.

## 2.16 **Judgement**

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

### 3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 3.1 The Panel notes that UoB graduate attributes are clearly stated in the UILOs, which are mapped to the PEOs and to the PILOs. The UILOs are categorised into effective communication, technology competence, critical thinking knowledge and skills, information literacy, responsibility and integrity, and life-long learning. The Panel appreciates that graduate attributes are stated at the university level and are known to students and staff, as confirmed through interview sessions. However, as stated earlier in this report, the amended outcomes and objectives are not the ones used in the programme documentation or the SER (see paragraph 1.4), and some of the PEOs and PILOs that are used in the assessment of the graduate attributes need to be revised; there are also cases of incorrect mapping of the current PEOs, PILOs and UILOs. For instance, PILO 3 'Produce original critical reviews of scholarly work by analysing, evaluating, and synthesizing information found in the literature to build on the existing knowledge and concepts of different fields' is mapped to UILO 5 'Responsibility and Integrity' and to UILO 6 'Life-long learning'; while, it is better to map it to UILO 3 'Critical Thinking Knowledge and Skill'. The Panel further notes that the programme has made an effort to ensure the validity of its assessment through the course assessment forms. However, there is no direct evidence that attainment of the graduate attributes and/or programme outcomes is being appropriately and consistently measured. This is due to alignment issues noted earlier in this paragraph and to the lack of effectively measuring the CILOs, mainly because some of them are not measurable nor clearly written, and also due to some assessments being mapped to the PILOs instead of the CILOs (see paragraphs 1.3 and 1.5). The Panel urges the College to implement a system that assures that graduate attributes are accurately embedded within the programme documentation, in order to ensure reliable assessment and hence the achievement of graduate attributes (see Paragraphs 3.3 – 3.6).
- 3.2 The UoB has a Benchmarking Policy that was approved in 2015, the purpose of which is to 'ensure that the University's performance is comparable to national and international standards'. In order to equate academic standards, the SER states that the NQF level descriptors are used to ensure that each course and consequently the whole programme, is within the same level required in terms of knowledge and skills. Nonetheless, the mapping was done for the old PILOs (8 PILOs) and not the newly revised ones (5 PILOs) submitted for this review. The SER also states that the 'scope of study and content of the programme' was benchmarked with the British Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) definition of Master of Arts programme attributes as stated in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2010)' and was found to be 'consistent'. The SER also illustrates that a

benchmarking of PEOs, PILOs, and courses offered at other regional and international programmes has also taken place. However, neither the information in the SER nor in other evidence clarified how the attributes of MAEL students are consistent with those of the QAA definition; how the benchmarking process was managed; what was the scope of benchmarking as only course offerings were mapped; and how the benchmarking outcomes were used to inform improvement. This informal benchmarking process was verified during the interviews when it was confirmed that benchmarking took place last year to justify the structure of the courses. The Panel acknowledges the efforts made by the programme team to informally benchmark some aspects of the programme, in order to verify the equivalence of its academic standards. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that procedures stated in UoB's formal benchmarking policy were not adhered to and that benchmarking should not be limited only to PEOs, PILOs, and course offerings but expanded to other areas such as assessment, admission (see paragraph 2.1) and graduate achievements. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should implement a formal benchmarking exercise of all aspects of the programme, including academic standards and admission criteria, in accordance with the university's benchmarking policy.

- 3.3 The University has appropriate assessment policy and procedures, as noted earlier (see paragraph 1.7). Examples of implementation of the assessment policy, which were verified during student and faculty interviews, include: all MAEL courses provide the students during the first week of the semester with course outlines that include typical course information and assessment plans, the University assessment weightings for final examinations, and information on the process of grade appeals. It became evident during the interviews that MAEL faculty members are primarily responsible for ensuring that the assessment policy and procedures are implemented, except for grade reviews, which are the responsibility of the Chairperson. Student survey results indicate that instructors apply assessment rules and regulations, which are available on the website; and which the students confirmed during interviews. As noted earlier (see paragraph 1.7), evidence indicates that there is consistency in assessments' implementation, that both formative and summative assessment tools are used, and that students receive prompt feedback. However, the Panel notes that the anti-plagiarism policy is not adhered to and faculty preferred to deal with it internally. With the exception of external examiners for the theses, the moderation of course assessment is not implemented to ensure that assessment is consistent with learning outcomes. Moreover, course files provided during the site visit showed that rubrics are not provided for each assessment, thus, indicating a lack of consistent usage of appropriate rubrics. Furthermore, there is no evidence of a systematic review of the assessment policies and procedures. The Panel appreciates that assessment policies and procedures are well-communicated and are available to students; faculty members use assessment tools and mark schemes stated in the course specifications; and feedback is promptly provided to students. Nonetheless, the Panel recommends that the College should implement a formal system with clear lines of responsibility for ensuring

that the programme applies all aspects of the university's assessment policy, including moderation of assessment, the use of rubrics for marking, and the handling of plagiarism.

- 3.4 According to the SER and faculty interviews, there are mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessments with outcomes to assure the academic standards of the graduates, such as the course specifications and the course assessment form; however, there is a lack of evidence of appropriately linking course assessments to CILOs or of appropriately measuring the outcomes. For instance, some of the sampled course specifications reviewed mapped course assessments to PILOs rather than CILOs (e.g. ENGL543, ENGL 545, and ENGL 547). The link between some CILOs and PILOs (e.g. ENGL541, ENGL543, and ENGL 547) in some courses was unclear. Some courses were mapped to more PILOs than the ones listed in the SER (e.g. ENGL543 and ENGL547), which could be due to programme changes made recently and some CILOs were unmeasurable (ENGL542 'Have awareness of...'). In all cases, the CILOs were not being appropriately measured, as the understanding of measuring learning outcomes is 'A CILO is considered achieved if the average score of students is 70+', which is inconsistent with the percentage needed by the University in order to pass the courses in the Master programme. This does not also account for measuring the individual CILOs or the percentage of students who achieved the learning outcomes. During the interviews and after review of the course assessment forms, it became apparent that individual CILOs are not measured. This coupled with the inaccuracy of the mapping of the assessments to the CILOs, and to the PILOs, which makes it difficult to ascertain whether academic standards are assured. The Panel recommends that the College should revise the alignment of course assessments with learning outcomes to ensure the achievement of academic standards of the graduates.
- 3.5 The UoB has a policy on the moderation of examinations and student assessments that covers the requirements of internal pre- and post-assessment moderation. Moreover, the QAAC manual states that 'internal moderation processes' principles at UoB ... aim to ensure that all assessments are applied consistently'. As noted earlier (in paragraph 3.3), the Panel concluded from interviews and the provided supporting materials that there is no evidence of a formal, internal pre- or post-assessment moderation system for setting assessment instruments and grading student achievement, except for an internal examiner for the Master thesis who only examines students' achievements. However, the Panel was informed during faculty interviews that they sometimes meet informally to discuss students' achievement and grades but documented evidence was not provided. Moreover, evidence provided indicates that this informal moderation is not effective in detecting and preventing issues detected in the assessment tools used such as misalignment of assessment tools and CILOs (see paragraph 3.5). The Panel recommends that the College should implement formal internal moderation in line with the university's procedures; and develop mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of internal moderation, in order to ensure fair and rigorous assessment.

- 3.6 UoB has a policy for the Moderation of Examinations and Student Assessment that covers the requirements of external moderation of assessment. Moreover, the QAAC manual states that 'feedback and outcomes of internal and external moderation support further development of good practice' and 'external moderation of assessment must be conducted for those programmes that do not have any review cycle of accreditation', which is the case for the MAEL programme. The Panel concluded from the provided evidence and interviews that there is no external moderation system implemented nor mechanisms in place to allow for feedback on assessment of courses. Moreover, while external examiners take part in the Master theses *viva* and provide brief reports with recommendations, there is no evidence of external moderation across the programme for the Master theses to ensure consistency of grading among the different examination panels. The Panel recommends that the College should implement the university's external moderation system and assess its effectiveness.
- 3.7 The Panel examined samples of students' assessed work and found that the assessment tools are generally at an appropriate level for a Master of Arts in Applied English Language Studies programme. A variety of assessment tools (presentations, reports, case studies, and examinations) assessing both theoretical knowledge and practical applications are utilized. The course files indicate that the level of achievement in the samples of students' assessed work is, in general, appropriate to the level and type of the programme and grades mostly follow a normal distribution curve. However, the standard of work in some writing tasks of a few students was not at an expected level from students at a Master programme. The Panel acknowledges the variety of assessment tools used in the programme; and that students' level of achievement in general is appropriate to the level and type of the programme. Nonetheless, the Panel advises the College to investigate ways to enhance students' writing proficiency of those who need extra support, so as to ensure that all aspects of students' works are at a Master level.
- 3.8 The SER states that the programme uses two main methods to assess the level of PILO achievement, a direct method of assessing the PILOs through the achievement of CILOs using the course assessment forms; and an indirect method using senior exit and alumni surveys. Another measure used 'is external and internal examiners of dissertations'. As stated earlier, the immeasurability of some of the CILOs, the lack of alignment of CILOs to PILOs, and the lack of measuring the CILOs individually make it extremely difficult to measure the PILOs adequately (see paragraphs 1.3, 1.5, 3.4). Moreover, individual CILOs are not measured in practice (as noted in paragraph 3.4) and hence assessment of achievements of PILOs is not possible. However, alumni and employer surveys show acceptable satisfaction with abilities upon graduation although the number of respondents is low. Moreover, interviews confirmed that surveying alumni and employers is irregular. Nonetheless, interviewed thesis external examiners were satisfied with the level of achievement of students in their dissertations. Course files indicate that grades mostly follow a normal distribution curve with hardly any failures, noting that

dismissed students (noted in paragraph 2.2) are not reflected in the final grades. The Panel concludes that there is a lack of detail as to how graduate attainment is systematically measured internally and confirmed by external independent scrutiny. The Panel recommends that the College should implement effective measures that ensure that the level of graduates' achievement meets the programme aims and its ILOs.

- 3.9 According to the QAAC Quality Manual, cohort analysis should be conducted in academic programmes on a regular basis. The programme team provided data on the number of admitted students, registered students, graduates, and number of students who left the programme along with length of study. The data on admitted students for the past three years shows that the intake of the programme has been fluctuating in number, where 2014-2015 had the largest intake of 15 students and six new students were enrolled in the subsequent year. The majority of the intake are females and are local (close to 80%) with a small percentage being regional. The Panel notes that the quickest batch to graduate was the batch of 2012 where 30% of students completed the programme in four years, and around 15% of 2011 intake took up to six years to complete the programme. Moreover, since programme inception, the total number of dismissed students from the programme is around 15% and the number of withdrawals from the programme is 9%. Even though the Panel was informed during interviews that the Registration Department could provide the needed data, it was noted that there is lack of evidence to show that the programme conducts systematic cohort analysis and follows student progression year on year, and discrepancies were noticed between the different provided data. Moreover, no evidence was provided to indicate that the results of cohort data is analysed or used to inform decision making for the programme. The Panel notes that rates of dismissal are in line with other universities in the region and some other international institutions, but the duration needed to complete the graduation requirement is high, and the Panel was not provided with evidence of conducted analysis to find out the reasons. Moreover, no evidence on the first destination of graduates was provided. The Panel recommends that the College should implement a systematic cohort analysis, study the reasons for the long duration needed to complete the programme requirements, develop a mitigation plan and gather data on graduates first destinations.
- 3.10 As part of the MAEL programme requirements, students must complete a Master thesis (ENGL 550), which counts as nine credit hours and students can register for it after completing the required courses, in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester or thereafter. There are policy and procedures with regard to the thesis at the University level, which include information on the selection criteria of faculty members as supervisors, the required forms for registration and evaluation, the thesis writing guide, and the responsibilities of both the postgraduate student and the supervisor. The Panel notes that these regulations are appropriate for the thesis component of the programme and are available on the website of the Deanship of Graduate Studies. Moreover, the Panel learned during interviews that faculty and students are aware of these regulations related to the assignment of the thesis topic and

the supervisor, as well as to the dissertation *viva*, which is conducted, by an internal as well as an external examiner and student supervisor. The Panel was provided with samples of the student dissertations as well as with the titles of theses for the period from 2002 to 2017, and notes that there is evidence of feedback provided by the external examiners for amendments. Using two different standard forms, the internal supervisor verifies that recommended modifications are completed before and after the defence and are, signed by all committee members. Nonetheless, external examiners noted during interviews that they do not receive feedback on modifications implemented in the theses based on their comments. Moreover, the Panel noted during interviews that students are satisfied with the experience gained from the Master research component and that external supervisors find the students' work in the thesis as being at a comparable level regionally. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies and procedures for the management and assessment of the Master thesis that are well-implemented and communicated to stakeholders. Moreover, the Panel was informed during interviews that the anti-plagiarism policy is not strictly implemented. The Panel urges the College to ensure that the anti-plagiarism policy is implemented consistently (see paragraph 3.3). The Panel also advises that the programme implements a monitoring mechanism for improvement of policies and procedures related to the Master thesis and provides feedback to external examiners regarding their recommendations of amendments to theses.

- 3.11 The University Quality Manual states that programmes should utilise a Programme Advisory Committee to provide feedback on the professional and labour market needs and provides clear terms of reference for the committee. According to the SER, the MAEL programme utilises two advisory committees: The Programme Advisory Committee (PAC), which includes employers and alumni and the Students Advisory Committee (SAC). From the interview conducted with the SAC members, the Panel noted that the 2017-2018 committee was established a few weeks before the site visit and that the members did not conduct their first meeting yet. They informed the Panel that they have received the terms of reference and are looking forward to participating in this committee. During the interview with PAC members, the Panel noted that the PAC is an advisory committee for both DELL's undergraduate and graduate programmes. They reported meeting twice as evidenced in the minutes of their meetings. Representatives from the PAC noted that they received the committee's terms of reference and made several recommendations for programme improvement but had not been informed of any actions taken on their recommendations from their previous meetings (March 2017 and November 2017). From interviews and the provided evidence, the Panel concludes that PAC members are from appropriate fields but there is no evidence that recommendations made by the recently formed advisory committees are used systematically to inform programme decision-making. The Panel acknowledges the effort of DELL in recently forming programme advisory committees and the clear terms of reference at the institutional level for these committees. However, the Panel recommends that the College

should expedite the implementation of policies and procedures related to programme advisory committees, to obtain feedback and act on their recommendations to improve the programme.

3.12 According to the SER, the programme collects feedback to gauge stakeholders' satisfaction on the standards of the graduate profile through student exit, alumni and employer surveys. The Panel notes that student exit surveys from the last three years indicate that graduates generally are satisfied that they attained the knowledge and skills needed for functioning well in the job market. Moreover, a recent alumni survey found that the programme equips students with analytical abilities and adequate linguistic knowledge and skills for employment and lifelong learning. However, the Panel notes that the number of survey respondents is very low and the respondents' response rate is not indicated, which makes it difficult to generalise findings to all alumni. Moreover, the majority of respondents indicated that they have not been contacted by DELL since their graduation. The Panel interviewed alumni and employers during the site visit and found that they were relatively satisfied with the performance of MAEL graduates. Employers noted graduates' good work ethics and alumni noted the ability to progress in their jobs. However, both employers and alumni noted that students need to be familiar with more technology and that it might be helpful to add a translation course in the programme. The Panel notes with appreciation that there is a general satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile amongst alumni and employers. However, the Panel concluded from the evidence and interviews that systematic alumni and employers' surveys were not conducted and interviewees did not remember completing a survey recently. The Panel urges the College to more systematically investigate the satisfaction of all its stakeholders and to improve the response rate of all surveys (see paragraph 4.8).

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

- Graduate attributes are stated at a university level and are known to students and staff.
- Assessment policies and procedures are well communicated and made available to students; faculty members use assessment tools and marking schemes stated in the course specifications; and feedback is promptly provided to students.
- There are clear policies and procedures for the management and assessment of the Master thesis, which are well-implemented and communicated to stakeholders.
- There is a general satisfaction with the standards of the graduate profile amongst alumni and employers.

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

- implement a formal benchmarking exercise of all aspects of the programme, including academic standards and admission criteria, in accordance with the university's benchmarking policy
- implement a formal system with clear lines of responsibility to ensure that the programme applies all aspects of the university's assessment policy, including moderation of assessment, the use of rubrics for marking, and the handling of plagiarism
- revise the alignment of course assessments with learning outcomes to ensure the achievement of academic standards of graduates
- implement formal internal moderation in line with the university's procedures; and develop mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of internal moderation to ensure fair and rigorous assessment
- implement the university's external moderation system and assess its effectiveness
- implement effective measures to ensure that the level of graduates' achievement meets the programme aims and its intended learning outcomes
- implement a systematic cohort analysis; study the reasons for the long duration needed to complete the programme requirements; develop a mitigation plan; and gather data on graduates' first destinations
- expedite the implementation of policies and procedures related to programme advisory committees, to obtain feedback and act on their recommendations to improve the programme.

### 3.15 **Judgement**

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

## 4. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

- 4.1 According to the SER, the management of the programmes offered by DELL is based on UoB's policies, procedures, and regulations, which are comprised of a range of policies and procedures and guided by the Quality Manual. Examples of existing policies and procedures include Assessment Strategy, Academic Staff Promotion Policy, Faculty Performance Appraisal Policy, Anti-Plagiarism Policy, Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy and the Higher Studies Regulations. The Panel met with academic and administrative staff who confirmed that these policies and procedures are communicated to them and students *via* e-mails, website, induction day, and by QAAC as well as the College Quality Assurance Office. Interviewed staff were able to discuss some of the policies and procedures, which have been utilized to enhance the quality of delivering the programme such as advising, revision of programme objectives and outcomes, and grade appeal processes. Policies and procedures relevant to students are included in the Student Handbook and on the university's website, and interviewed students were well-aware of these. The Panel appreciates the existence of institutional policies and regulations that are sufficient for the effective management of the programme and that the University communicates these policies to all its stakeholders. However, policies such as benchmarking, formative assessment, moderation (part of the overall assessment policy), teaching load, and annual review, as well as how policies are reviewed were unclear and were not consistently implemented, and the Panel urges the College to monitor their implementation to ensure that these are implemented in a consistent and effective way, as indicated in different parts of this Report.
- 4.2 The MAEL programme is managed primarily by the Chairperson of the Department who chairs the Department Council where major academic decisions are made. The SER states, and the interviews concur, that the structures supporting the programme are the University Council (Senior Administration), College Council (Dean, Department Chairs, and Department Senior Representatives), the Department Council (faculty members with the Chairperson), departmental committees (including the Higher Studies Committee which has consistent meetings), section representatives and course coordinators. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the custodian of the academic standards for the programme is the Chairperson in collaboration with the Department Council. It was evident that lines of responsibility (the reporting lines) are clear and transparent to faculty and administrative staff. The Panel acknowledges that the programme has an overall clear hierarchical management structure that demonstrates transparent lines of communication to support responsible leadership. However, the structure that supports the management

hierarchy, specifically the committees and transitioning of responsibility, could be more effective. According to interviews conducted with various faculty members and based on committees' meeting minutes, the number of meetings or meeting schedules and the members are not consistent. Also, the Panel noted that committees vary in different documentations and do not have clear scope, meeting schedules, service duration, and consistent membership. Further, when a new administrative head is appointed, there is no formal transition or handover, as evidenced by interviews. These issues negatively impact the effectiveness of the overall programme management. Hence, the Panel advises the College to further ensure that there is a clear scope, meeting schedules, service duration for all committees and that there is a clear and formal transition of responsibility between former and current leaders at all levels.

4.3 According to the SER, the Department Quality Assurance Committee (DQAC) is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the programme and implementing modifications at the department level through the Quality Assurance Office in the College of Arts and within the supervision system of the QAAC at the university level. During interviews, the Panel was informed that DQAC is comprised of the programme faculty working in collaboration with the PAC and SAC, as per the Quality Manual. The QAAC has an overall responsibility of ensuring the quality of programmes at university level and is led by a Director and an Executive Quality Assurance Committee with 10 quality directors from each college across the University. The Department has been evaluated by QAAC on several occasions, for example in 2014 and 2016, which led to reports for improvement. These reports were followed by a departmental Improvement Plan in 2016, which was approved during the Department Council meeting for implementation and to be monitored in December 2017. The Panel was provided with evidence of meetings of the DQAC to support their involvement in quality assurance. The Panel appreciates that there is a formal quality assurance management system at the university and college levels, which is implemented in the programme. However, the Panel notes from the provided evidence and the conducted interviews that there is no link between well-stated quality policy/procedures and the actual implementation, which is recent in nature. The PAC and the SAC were recently formed with inconsistency in their memberships (see paragraph 3.11). Moreover, DQAC activity has been recent with two meetings in November 2017, and the course portfolios, including the Course Syllabus Forms, are not well prepared and do not follow QAAC format (as discussed in paragraph 1.3). Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure the consistent implementation of all the institution's quality assurance policies and procedures, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness with regard to the MAEL programme.

4.4 The SER states that a number of meetings and workshops were organised and attended by the DELL staff to ensure that they have a common understanding of the university's internal quality assurance system and their roles and responsibilities in this regard. Interviewed staff indicated that quality assurance mechanisms were introduced to the

programme several years ago. Nonetheless, evidence provided indicates that an actual understanding of quality assurance (the quality culture) has become widespread over the Department only recently (see paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3). From the SER and interviews with faculty and administrative staff, the Panel was made aware of various workshops that were provided through the QAAC and the College of Arts Quality Assurance Office (QAO), including workshops on NQF mapping, writing CILOs and PILOs, improving familiarity with the Quality Assurance Framework, and several others. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that the conducted workshops were fairly recent. According to interviews, these workshops were not compulsory to attend and were not consistently evaluated for effectiveness by attending participants. Further, the workshop evaluations that were provided to the Panel were in Arabic only, which is not appropriate for the DELL and its international faculty members. Both academic and support staff interviewed showed an understanding of the role of quality management in the programme. However, as evidenced by interviews, the SER, and the course portfolios examined on-site, while the quality culture is improving at DELL, there is no common understanding of exactly why these mechanisms are used and of the standards required. The SER has notable inconsistencies and missing components even though, as evidenced, faculty noted that it was checked at several levels. The Panel acknowledges the commitment and improved participation from faculty members in quality assuring the programme recently, particularly considering their high teaching load and administrative responsibilities, and advises the College to investigate ways to increase the understanding of the role of academics and support staff in quality assurance to help ensure the effectiveness of the programme's offerings.

- 4.5 UoB has documented regulations for 'Academic Programme and Course Development' that require new programme development to be consistent with the department's mission, the college's strategic plan, and the labour market needs. Moreover, QAAC regulations for starting new programmes include rationale, possible study plan, stakeholders' perspectives and full development of the proposed programme. Final approval of new programmes rests with the University Council and the Board of Trustees. The Panel acknowledges that the procedures for the development and approval of new programmes at UoB are appropriate.
- 4.6 UoB has a 'Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy' which stipulates submitting an annual SER of the programme to the QAAC, which analyses the assessment of CILOs, PILOs and PEOs; alumni, employers and senior exit surveys; and PAC and SAC feedback. Evidence and interviews indicate that the College of Arts has undergone recent internal evaluation, which included the review of course files by the QAAC and College QAO, for which evaluation reports were generated in 2014 and 2016 as well as an improvement plan in 2016; and made several improvements including PEO and PILO changes and other changes as part of the improvement plan. Evidence provided shows that the internal evaluation involved members of the QAAC and one member specialised

in the field. While the report was produced in Arabic, the specific points for the DELL were translated into English. Moreover, the Department in collaboration with QAAC has conducted evaluations of some of the courses, senior exit surveys, and student satisfaction surveys. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence showing that consistent annual programme evaluations are conducted for the MAEL programme. The Panel appreciates the increased efforts of the College and the University for internal evaluation of the programme and the use of the review feedback to guide programme improvements. Nonetheless, the Panel advises the College to strengthen mechanisms used to monitor the implementation of the improvement plans and to ensure that annual review of the programme is carried out consistently at both the college and department levels.

- 4.7 UoB's institutional 'Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy' clarifies that periodic programme reviews should incorporate feedback from internal and external stakeholders to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes and the effectiveness of the curriculum. Moreover, according to QAAC's Quality Manual, the programme depends on the 'Programme-within-College Reviews' conducted by the BQA, and the NQF's placement. Nonetheless, this is the first review that the BQA conducts for this programme and the programme is yet to be placed on the NQF. According to interviews, internal periodic reviews are conducted by the QAAC every five years. Moreover, the SER indicates that the internal review process requires the QAAC, the College QAO, and the DQAC to gather feedback from academic staff, students (every semester), graduating seniors (every semester) and other stakeholders such as employers and alumni (every 1-2 years), to determine the satisfaction level and perspectives on different aspects of the programme, as well as to assess the PILOs. The Panel is of the view that the procedures in place for external review are adequate and the recent efforts for internal programme review can have a positive contribution to programme improvement. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that a systematic implementation for the periodic review of the programme, which incorporates all aspects of the programme and external feedback, and the use of its findings in programme improvement is not evident. The Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the programme is subjected to a periodic programme review systematically, which evaluates the programme holistically and includes both internal and external input and uses the outcomes to improve the programme.
- 4.8 UoB has a 'Programme Quality Assurance and Enhancement Policy' that states that programme development should be informed by structured feedback from stakeholders. The Panel notes that every semester the University collects feedback from students' course and instructor evaluations as well as from senior exit surveys. Further, the Panel was provided with evidence of surveys conducted recently to seek feedback from faculty members, alumni, and employers, and received feedback from meetings of PAC, noting that SAC had not yet held a meeting. However, the number of respondents to the surveys shows a poor response rate. The Panel acknowledges the increased and recent efforts to gather stakeholders' perspectives from a variety of sources to improve the programme,

and some of the comments from student surveys are analysed as shown by the evidence provided. Nonetheless, there is a lack of evidence of a formal mechanism that shows that the feedback is sought consistently and its outcomes are used to inform regular decisions of the programme and made available to stakeholders, even though there is an Improvement Plan for 2016. The Panel recommends that the College should adopt more systematic and rigorous procedures to collect and use stakeholders' feedback, make informed decisions regarding the programme based on it, and formally report to stakeholders the actions taken to address any identified issues.

- 4.9 The University has several units, centres and Deanships, which provide professional development, such as the Unit for Teaching Excellence and Leadership (UTEL), Zain E-Learning Centre, and at the College level, there are several opportunities for faculty members to attend and participate in conferences and seminars locally and internationally. In addition, several academic staff members received a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP) through UTEL and in affiliation with an international university. Furthermore, the Panel learned that the 'Faculty Appraisal Performance Policy' will be implemented at the University this semester and this will also link professional development needs to faculty appraisal. However, currently, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal process to link the professional development needs of academic staff to the actual activities conducted. The Department also has a Conferences and Seminar Committee, responsible for research activities, seminars, and conference attendance, which is quite active, as evidenced by minutes of several meetings, correspondence and proposals. A number of the interviewed academic staff confirmed that they have benefited from the staff development programme, attended conferences, and seem to be quite active in professional development activities as evidenced by the SER and various other evidence. The Panel appreciates the participation of faculty members in professional development activities made available by the university units and centres, which are in place to provide professional development opportunities for faculty members, and advises the College to expedite the implementation of systematically linking staff's development needs to their annual performance review process.
- 4.10 According to the SER, the programme depends on PAC, stakeholders' surveys, and follow-up with alumni and employers to gather feedback about the local labour market needs. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of systematic scoping of the labour market and various interviews with the faculty and administrative staff confirmed that. The Panel acknowledges that the Department has made recent efforts to acquire feedback from varied sources to informally scope the labour market needs but with very limited outcome. The Panel recommends that the College should develop and implement a formal mechanism for systematic scoping of the labour market needs and utilize the data received to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and relevant to the market needs.

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

- There are institutional policies and regulations that are sufficient for the effective management of the programme and the University communicates these policies to all its stakeholders.
- There is a formal quality assurance management system at the university and college levels, which is implemented in the programme.
- There are increased efforts of the College and the University for the internal evaluation of the programme and the use of the review feedback to guide programme improvements.
- Faculty members participate in professional development activities made available by the university units and centres.

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

- ensure the consistent implementation of all the institution's quality assurance policies and procedures, and monitor and evaluate their effectiveness with regard to the MAEL programme
- ensure that the programme is subjected to a periodic programme review systematically, which evaluates the programme holistically and includes both internal and external input and uses the outcomes to improve the programme
- adopt more systematic and rigorous procedures to collect and use stakeholders' feedback to make informed decisions regarding the programme, and provide timely reports to the stakeholders on actions taken to address any identified issues
- develop and implement a formal mechanism for systematic scoping of the labour market needs and utilize the data received to ensure that the programme is up-to-date and relevant to the market needs.

#### 4.13 **Judgement**

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

## 5. Conclusion

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

**There is limited confidence in the Masters of Arts in Applied English Language Studies offered by the University of Bahrain.**