



هيئة صنان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Higher Education Review Unit

Programme Follow-Up Review Report

**Bachelor of Arts Honours in Business
Administration**

University College of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

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1. The Programme Follow-up Review Overview

The site follow-up visit by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) Programme Review is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in The Kingdom of Bahrain.

The follow-up review applies to all programmes that have been reviewed in 'Cycle -1' of the programme reviews undertaken by HERU, and that received a judgement of 'limited confidence'. Whilst those that received a 'no confidence' judgement are subject to a full new review.

The subsequent sections of this report have been compiled as part of Phase 2 of the HERU/QAAET's programme follow-up cycle highlighted in the HERU Programme Review Handbook, and associated with the on-going process of Institutional and academic quality and enhancement review of Higher Education Institutions located in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1.1 The aims of the follow-up review are to:

- (i) Assess the progress made in quality enhancement and improvement (in accordance with the four QAAET indicators) of The University College of Bahrain's, Bachelor in Business Administration Programme (BBA) since the original programme was assessed in October 2009, for which the review report was published in June 2010.
- (ii) Provide further information and support for the continuous improvement of academic standards and quality enhancement of higher education provision, specifically within the BBA degree at the University College of Bahrain, and for higher education provision within the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a whole.

2. The Institutional and Programme Context of the Review

The original programme review of the Bachelor in Business Administration Programme, at the University College of Bahrain, (UCB) in the Kingdom of Bahrain was conducted by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in October 2009.

The overall judgement, in accordance with the HERU/QAAET Programme Review Handbook of the original Review Panel was that of '**limited confidence**' in the Bachelor in Business Administration Programme, at UCB. Consequently the follow-up review process incorporated the review of the evidence presented by UCB to HERU/QAAET, the Improvement Plan, the second Self-Evaluation Report SER(2) and during the follow-up site visit and other key documents relevant to the review.

The original External Review Panel's judgement on the UCB's Bachelor of Business Administration Programme for each indicator was as follows:

Indicator 1: Curriculum; 'did not satisfy' the indicator

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the programme; 'satisfied' the indicator

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the graduates; 'satisfied' the indicator

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance 'did not satisfy' the indicator.

As a result of the above, most of the time, during follow-up visit, was focused on re-examining the Programme and the quality assurance and enhancement processes associated with those Indicators that did not satisfy the minimum HERU/QAAET standards at the time of the original site visit in 14-15 October 2009, (*i.e. Indicator 1: Curriculum and Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance*) and determining the extent to which the original Review Panel recommendations for these indicators had been demonstrably reflected in the revised Improvement Plan and were adequately implemented in the BBA Programme, at UCB at the time of the follow-up site visit.

It should be noted, however, that the indicators for Efficiency and Academic Standards of the programme; were also considered in relation to the recommendations made by the original Review Panel in 2009 during the site visit of October 2011.

The aim of the following section of this follow-up Review Report is to evaluate the progress made in UCB's BBA Programme since its original review, and to determine the extent to which the Programme's Improvement Plan has been applied in a manner which

satisfactorily demonstrates that the recommendations of the original review report have been adequately implemented.

2.1 The External Reviewer's Overarching Comments on the Progress Demonstrated for University College of Bahrain's Bachelor of Business Administration Programme

Sections 3-6 of this report go on to discuss the extent to which the University College of Bahrain's BBA Programme Team has adequately addressed the Review Panel recommendations stipulated in the Programme Review of October 2009.

This evaluation is based on the evidence contained in the SER submitted in June 2010, the relevant appendices of the report, the original QAAET Programme Review report, the Programme Improvement Plan, the institutional review report and a considerable amount of supplementary material submitted to the Panel on Thursday 20th of October 2011 and a substantial number of extra evidence documents submitted to the Panel on the day of the site visit.

The institution, programme team and their external consultant/reviewers evidently put considerable effort into providing the requested Supplementary Material and Extra Evidence requested by the Panel since the original submission of the Improvement Plan to QAAET in June 2011.

These efforts resulted in the provision of a substantial amount of supplementary and additional evidence being submitted to the follow-up review panel on the day of the site visit.

Although this Supplementary and Extra Evidence provided during the site visit addressed some of the concerns initially highlighted by the Panel related to the teaching, learning and assessment policy, and the adequacy of the delineation of programme and course ILOs prior to the site visit, some of this additional documentation lacked sufficient detail concerning how the intended measures for improvement had materially impacted on the overall programme content and quality management and enhancement.

As a result of the omission of specific details of programme content and quality enhancement in some key areas, it proved difficult, at times, for the Panel to extract the necessary details of what specific actions had actually been implemented by the programme team prior to the follow-up site visit. Consequently, the focus of the follow-up site visit concentrated on seeking clarification of these matters *via* a dialogue with UCB representatives concerning what and what had not been accomplished by

the UCB BBA programme team for the Panel's recommendations for Indicators 1 and 4.

The following sections go on to detail the Panel's findings concerning the extent to which the original recommendations made by the first UCB BBA programme review panel had been implemented by the time of the follow-up site visit by representatives of HERU.

3. Indicator 1: Curriculum Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration programme, University College of Bahrain, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of October 2009, in terms of curriculum, the teaching and the assessment of students' achievements; and as a consequence contributes to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme have met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in "Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Threshold for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress", of this report.

- 3.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding curriculum the Panel notes with appreciation that
 - 3.1.1 The programme team has developed further the programme's formal policy concerning teaching, learning, and assessment for the BBA degree.
 - 3.1.2 The BBA course descriptors have been revised in order to clarify the delineation of knowledge and understanding related to Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and skills development associated with the successful completion of each course. A common framework for the delineation of higher level thinking skills in terms of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation has been developed for the BBA programme.
 - 3.1.3 The programme team has changed the status of the Internship from an elective, to a compulsory course.
 - 3.1.4 The appropriateness of the MGT490 as a capstone course has been reviewed by the programme team, and the Engineering Management concentration has been removed as an optional programme specialism.
 - 3.1.5 There has been a move in the orientation of the programme teaching and learning towards the articulation of a more student-centred, interdependent and independent learning approach as the norm rather than the exception for course in the programme, moving away from a 'teaching to the book' methodology.
 - 3.1.6 UCB has created an institution wide 'Committee of Curriculum Development' in order to apply a uniform approach to the articulation of programme and course ILOs for the BBA programme. This was reflected in the adoption of a common structure in the generic headings contained in the course descriptors.

3.1.7 The need to incorporate student feedback as a means of fostering academic development has been addressed partly in the revised programme Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy, this has been implemented in some, but not all course descriptors.

3.2 The Panel suggests that the Business Administration Programme of UCB address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA programme:

- 3.2.1 The revised Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy highlights the goal of the programme to facilitate independent learning, and shift the emphasis of teaching and learning methodologies to the adoption of peer to peer learning, project based learning, interdependent learning via group projects, and the role of assessment feedback as part of an improved teaching, learning and assessment policy. However, this aspiration was not adequately reflected in the content of the individual teaching, learning and assessment strategy across all courses descriptors within the programme. Consequently, the goal of formulating independent learning needs to be incorporated in a comprehensive manner across the compulsory and elective BBA courses.
- 3.2.2 Despite demonstrable efforts on the part of the programme team and their advisors to undertake revisions in the formal programme teaching, learning assessment policy documentation, the implementation of a detailed common, formal policy on teaching, learning, and assessment for the BBA programme has not yet been uniformly implemented across all the compulsory and elective courses contained in the programme at the time of the site visit. As a consequence the Panel viewed this aspect of the original Panel's recommendation to 'consider ways of reducing the reliance on text book based teaching' to have been addressed for some, but not all courses and was, as a result judged to be 'currently in progress'. The Institution needs to develop and implement a mechanism to ensure the implementation of the policy across all programmes.
- 3.2.3 Deepening of knowledge for the compulsory and elective courses has not yet been adequately mapped in terms of ILOs and pre-requisites. The linkage across levels and between courses needs to be better explained and mapped so that the programme's aim of incorporating knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation related ILOs is better realised. Consequently the programme team needs to incorporate the desired knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation-related ILOs into the formal grading descriptors to replace the existing generic

criteria, in order to incorporate the capacity to evaluate the attainment of higher level skills, knowledge and understanding.

- 3.2.4 The revised curriculum skills map across the programme does not delineate in sufficient detail the linkage between lower and higher level intended learning outcomes between levels, and consequently course level intended learning outcomes are not linked to those across different levels of the programme. The programme needs to address this omission in terms of ILO mapping in order to better delineate how learning is deepened as well as widened from one programme level to another.
- 3.2.5 The revised Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy has highlighted the importance of student feedback as one of 35 guiding principles, however there currently exists no detailed formal policy covering the BBA degree to ensure that the assessment criteria for all individual formative and summative assignments are timeously communicated to all candidates, across both core and elective courses. The teaching, learning and assessment regulations for all courses offered on the BBA programme need to be revised to ensure that detailed assessment criteria are developed and applied for all courses. They should be made available to all candidates and written grading feedback performance forms need to adopted for each course assessment, so that they are in line with the course ILOs and that these forms are returned to candidates timeously.
- 3.2.6 While there is some evidence of the progress in the delineation of learning outcome pathways and differentiation of level of attainment between levels in some cognate areas of the programme (most notably in the areas of Insurance, Islamic banking, and Finance) there are some remaining inconsistencies in the approach adopted across all the subjects contained within the programme and this lack of consistency is reflected in content of some of the course outlines in relation to delineation of academic progression between levels in core subjects. This issue was the cause of some concern on the part of the Panel prior to the site visit. While this concern was partly addressed by the programme team, by reference to specific course outlines during the site visit, such as the capstone 'Internship' module, the Panel's concerns over the apparent lack of consistency in the articulation of 'higher' level learning outcomes, particularly, in those courses delivered towards the end of the programme remained. Consequently the Panel is of the view that the academic progression within learning pathways of the programme should be delineated in terms of the deepening as well as the broadening of learning *via* the delineation of higher level ILOs, in a consistent manner across all courses within the BBA programme.

3.2.7 The BBA programme team needs to delineate higher level learning outcomes *via* the use of appropriate terminology in order to communicate better the required development of candidates capacity for analysis, evaluation, critical appraisal and problem solving and synthesis and reflect these in the terms used to denote higher level ILOs to more precisely guide the determination of academic content and assessment and grading criteria for these courses.

3.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Curriculum are being addressed *via* relevant actions and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 1: Curriculum, and as a result the Programme now satisfies the HERU/QAAET requirements for this Indicator.

4. Indicator 2: Efficiency Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration programme, University College of Bahrain, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of October 2009, in terms of efficiency related to the use of available resources, the admitted students and the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates; and as a consequence contributes to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme have met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in "Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Threshold for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress", of this report.

- 4.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding the efficiency of the programme the Panel noted with appreciation that
 - 4.1.1 The institution has initiated a process to facilitate on-going dialogue with the librarian(s) in order to foster opportunities for enhancing library services and provision. A library improvement plan has been developed, which was in the process of implementation at the time of the site visit. UCB established a library based 'Learning Resources Centre' in order to augment the library services available to students and academic and research staff.
 - 4.1.2 The BBA programme team has adopted measures to ensure that BBA students have access to a 'current' student handbook.
 - 4.1.3 UCB staff have devised and implemented a 'library user survey'.
 - 4.1.4 UCB staff have initiated a programme of revision and re-evaluation of the library databases in order to support new initiatives for the enhancement of library facilities and services through the provision of new databases, e-journals and physical and electronic library stock.
 - 4.1.5 A new UCB research policy to support its Mission to be a leading provider of business education was being reviewed prior to implementation at the time of the follow-up site visit.
- 4.2 The Panel suggests that the Business Administration Programme of UCB should address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA programme:

- 4.2.1 The strategy for teaching and learning be revised to incorporate greater opportunities for e-learning and increased utilisation of library e-learning resources.
- 4.2.2 Improved facilities for group work and interdependent learning be developed to augment the existing learning resource centre e.g. dedicated classroom(s) for group meeting.
- 4.2.3 The existing library stock of e-journals and data base access be reviewed and increased proportionately in order to underpin student and staff research activities.
- 4.2.4 In addition to the research policy, a more formal transparent strategy to support research activity *via* adoption of a revised promotion and remuneration policy should be instituted to encourage and to reward staff for improved performance in target areas such as research publications outputs, international conference participation, access to research grants, funding of research training and related scholarship.

4.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Efficiency of the Programme are being addressed via relevant actions and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme.

5. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration programme, University College of Bahrain, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of October 2009, relating to meeting acceptable academic standards in comparison with equivalent Programmes in Bahrain and worldwide; and as a consequence contributes to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme have met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in "Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Threshold for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress", of this report.

- 5.1** In coming to its conclusion regarding academic standards of the graduates the Panel notes with appreciation that
- 5.1.1. The Institution developed an understanding amongst its faculty of the purpose and significance of appropriate ILOs in defining academic standards, a series of QAA workshops focusing on the purpose and design of ILOs for all academic and administrative support staff have been conducted.
 - 5.1.2. The faculty members adopted a number of initiatives in order to revise existing generic grading descriptors which resulted in the delineation of academic standards for UCB students.
 - 5.1.3. UCB increased the assessment of communication and research skills within the teaching, learning and assessment strategies in their courses and that this has been accomplished in some of the BBA. UCB had developed a First Destination Survey, has implemented the survey and had generated some initial findings arising from the analysis of the survey, by the time of the follow-up review.
 - 5.1.4. UCB considered ways in which employers could be more involved in the development of the Business Administration Programme, the Panel noted that UCB representatives has designed and implemented an employers' survey, and had undertaken analysis of content for the first research cycle and has begun to address some of the issues arising.
 - 5.1.5. The establishment of an external advisory committee from the business sector has been agreed in principle, but had not yet formally been convened by the time of the follow-up site visit.
 - 5.1.6. UCB established a new Curriculum Development Committee, has held a series of internal *ad hoc* committee meetings to address all curriculum issues with priority to HERU recommendations on reviewed programmes.

5.2 The Panel suggests that Business Administration Programme of UCB address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA programme under Indicator 3:

5.2.1 The Panel was concerned that by the time of the follow-up site visit the BBA programme team had not yet introduced a formal policy and mechanism for the external scrutiny of grades, curriculum content, and ILOs delineation. This lack of a formal policy and mechanism for external on going grade moderation and academic standard equivalence determination is compounded by the absence of the utilisation of a formal external programme advisory group, leading to conclusion on the part of Panel that BBA programme does not have in place adequate formal ongoing systems for benchmarking academic content and graduate standards for the BBA programme. Consequently, the Panel suggests to the institution to develop and implement a formal system for independent external academic scrutiny in order to ensure academic standards equivalence, via external grade moderation.

5.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Academic Standards of Graduates are being addressed via relevant actions and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates.

6 Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration programme, University College of Bahrain, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of October 2009, relating to the arrangements in place for managing the Programme, including quality assurance, as a consequence contributes to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme have met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in "Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Threshold for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress", of this report

- 6.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding the effectiveness of quality management and assurance, the Panel notes with appreciation that
 - 6.1.1 UCB has established a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Directorate and incorporated it into the College structure *via* the allocation of additional resources to support the revised QA function which is incorporated into the formal College QA structure and via the allocation of additional resources to support the revised QA function, e.g. the recruitment of an administrative assistant and the development and implementation of a series of formal staff training and briefing workshops, to clarify QA roles, responsibilities and lines of responsibility and authority.
 - 6.1.2 UCB put in place a formal system of regular and periodic reporting and review for the BBA programmes. Although the bulk of these initiatives concerned the college wide introduction of means of formal reporting mechanisms covering the areas of staff satisfaction, mission review, library utilisation, development of a revised institutional strategic plan, mechanisms for the quality management and enhancement of programmes, the strategic configuration of each programme or academic unit, including programme reviews, and programme and course evaluation, the BBA degree was covered by these initiatives.
 - 6.1.3 UCB implemented, in the year preceding the follow-up visit, a number of important amendments to the formal programme management structures across the college to enable the clarification of QA responsibilities. These changes involved the development of formal inter and intra departmental and reporting structures to facilitate enhanced programme level administration, and quality monitoring and enhancement, the establishment of a new Quality

Assurance and Accreditation Directorate and the appointment of a new Vice President with specific responsibility for the supervision and monitoring of 'Academic Affairs'.

- 6.1.4 The BBA programme has started analysing the course evaluation surveys in 2010. The Panel was provided with copies of course evaluation forms along with course evaluation reports. UCB has developed and implemented Alumni and Employer surveys; during the site visit the Panel saw evidence of surveys conducted in July 2011 and statistical analyses. The Institution needs to review the present practices for incorporating the views on external stakeholders on formal BBA programme and related college wide committees to ensure that the anticipated increased participation and feedback from external stakeholders is implemented prior to the next academic year.
 - 6.1.5 UCB allocate sufficient resources in order to further improve staff development policies and procedures. The institution provided some training to their staff to identify appropriate support for their career development, particularly in the area of research output, and training for teaching and learning for example in the drafting of higher level course and programme ILOs.
- 6.2 The Panel suggests that Business Administration Programme of UCB address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA programme. Specifically, that
- 6.2.1 The institution needs to develop and implement a mechanism to monitor the implementation of course evaluation surveys in order to 'close feedback loops' with students and to facilitate enhanced feedback for programme development.
 - 6.2.2 The Panel encourages the Institution to develop and implement a formalised staff development and appraisal system in order to support and reward the adoption of innovative teaching, learning and assessment strategies in the BBA programme and to help identify and to support the closure of identified skills gaps for example in the area of e-learning, and support publication in relevant journals and to participate in local and international conferences.
 - 6.2.3 UCB has developed a set of bylaws for the student council, however, the students are not yet represented in the institutional committees. The Panel encourages the Institution to develop a formal system of student representation and involvement in university affairs by appointing student representation on key college committees, in order to enhance the programme monitoring and student feedback reporting relationships.

- 6.2.4 A more formal coordinated system for the recording and documentation of emerging programme and college wide quality enhancement initiatives needs to be adopted and applied which better reflects the commitment of staff at the college and department level, and faculty members to undertake quality monitoring, enhancement and of the BBA programme. This system should include the confirmation of current ad hoc committees to standing committees, with prior scheduled meeting dates, and lines of authority and responsibility should be clarified and circulated to college staff and other key stakeholders, including students.
- 6.2.5 The Institution needs to review the present practices for incorporating the views on external stakeholders on formal BBA programme and related college-wide committees to ensure that the anticipated increased participation and feedback from external stakeholders is implemented prior to the next academic year.

6.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Effectiveness of the Quality Assurance are being addressed via relevant actions and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 4: Effectiveness of the Quality Assurance, and as a result the Programme now satisfies the HERU/QAAET requirements for this indicator.

7. Overall Conclusion

The outcome of the follow-up review process by HERU/QAAET for the BBA programme offered by UCB is as follows:

That the BBA programme at University College of Bahrain has successfully addressed the recommendations stated in the October 2009 review report and has implemented its improvement plan. The Panel now has confidence in the Programme.

Appendix 1: *The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation Panel (1) of Recommendation Implementation Progress*

- I. Extensive good practice is evidenced as a result of the comprehensive implementation of the Panel's recommendations for the indicator; or
- II. That the programme team have adequately addressed and have fully implemented the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for the indicator; or
- III. That the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for this indicator are currently being addressed via relevant actions (beyond the establishment of a new policy or committee) and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge, but has not yet fully emerged) for the indicator; or
- IV. That documented evidence exists that the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for the indicator have been addressed in the improvement plan, and are anticipated [by the programme team] to be implemented at some later date; or
- V. That the October 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for the indicator have not been adequately addressed in the action plan nor in the interventions by Faculty of the institution.