

EXAMINING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR INTERIOR DESIGN STUDENTS AT AHLIA UNIVERSITY – BAHRAIN

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ABSTRACT

Generally, the economic crisis in the world and the increasing number of graduates in all academic fields created challenges to employability. In this context, this research sheds light on the knowledge and skills the interior design graduates of Ahlia University (AU) have which sought by design firms in Bahrain. According to the last survey by the Professional Relations Office at Ahlia University for the interior design graduates shows that only 51.86% of the graduates were employed (44.44% in interior design jobs) which emphasize that employers are dissatisfied with the competencies of the interior design graduates. Generally, identifying these data allows universities reviewing their interior design curricula to meet the expected competencies in the market both locally and globally. Interviewing some of the employers in the interior design profession shows that the hiring criteria for graduates depend heavily on the graduates' skills, knowledge, and technology. Also, interior design alumni' feedback on Ahlia University regarding the curriculum will determine the knowledge areas and skills required by interior and architecture firms. As a result, a random sample of twentyfive (25) employers were interviewed and a questionnaire was mailed to a sample of 125 interior design students graduating from the Ahlia University in Bahrain between the years 2012 to 2017 to check their knowledge and design skills. Findings rigorously revealed a clear understanding of how to promote the professional competencies for the interior design graduates for Bahrain market. On the other hand, alumni agreed that they are less prepared in specific areas such as project budgets and schedules, project supervision, and principles of sustainability. Reviewing different literature in interior design and architecture education show that there is no study about the preferred alumni competencies by employers, thus this research is essential for the interior design department at Ahlia University, the alumni, and the industry.

Keywords: Interior design, alumni, knowledge, competencies, graduates, employers, employability, Bahrain.