Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance

College of Business and Finance

Ahlia University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 18-20 November 2014

HC053-C2-R053

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Acronyms

ADREG	Admission and Registration System
ATDC	Ahlia Training and Development Centre
AU	Ahlia University
BSAF	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance
BSBF	Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance
BSEF	Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance
BSMIS	Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System
BSMM	Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CEAB	The College External Advisory Board
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CME	The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
CRC	Curriculum Review Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
ISG	Institut Supérieur de Gestion

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MBA	Master's Degree in Business Administration
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QA	Quality Assurance
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training-Bahrain
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
TLAC	The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
UC	University Council
UQAC	University Quality Assurance Committee

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1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 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 National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) 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 QQA, 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.

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

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

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Ahlia University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Business and Finance was conducted by DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 18-20 November 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the college, these are: Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance , Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing, Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems and Master's Degree in Business Administration.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor of Banking and Finance based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by Ahlia University (AU), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

AU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 12 May 2014 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by the College of Business and Finance with the site visit taking place on 18-20 November 2014. In preparation for the review, AU conducted self-evaluation of all the programmes

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offered by the College and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 27 July 2014.

The DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Business Administration, Economics, Finance, Banking, Accounting, Management, Marketing, Management Information System, and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised eight external reviewers.

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel 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 AU will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its Bachelor of Banking and Finance (BSBF). The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of AU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, AU is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to AU for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty in the BSBF programme and the interviewed staff members of the institution.

1.3   Overview of the College of Business and Finance

The College of Business and Finance is one of the six colleges within Ahlia University (AU). The College was established in 2002 with a mission 'to provide high quality business education through experiential learning in a collegial and intellectually stimulating environment' as stated in the Self-Evaluation Report.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: Department of Banking and Finance, Department of Accounting and Economics, Department of Management and Marketing and Department of Management Information Systems. The College offers five undergraduate programmes including Bachelor's Degree in

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Accounting and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Management Information Systems and Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing. In addition to, the Master in Business Administration. At the time of the site visit, the total number of students in the College was 1437 with 46 specialized faculty members contributing to the delivery of all the programmes offered by the College.

1.4   Overview of the Bachelor's Degree of Banking and Finance

The Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance (BSBF) programme has been offered since the 2002-2003 academic year and was patterned on the programme offered by Brunel University, UK. The BSBF programme is designed to prepare students for careers either in the field of banking or finance. Since 2002-2003, 141 students have graduated from the programme. There are nine full-time administration staff within the College who contribute to the programme and the programme is supported by eight full-time teaching staff as well as one part-time staff. The BSBF programme had its first intake in February 2003 and six students graduated from its first batch in September 2005. In 2013-2014, 209 students were enrolled in the programme. Over 80% of the registered students are Bahrainis, with the majority of the remaining students being from GCC countries, principally from Saudi Arabia.

1.5   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	**Confidence**

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2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

2.1 Ahlia University has clear vision and mission statements at university and college levels. These statements are available and accessible to staff and students *via* a variety of methods including the Ahlia University Catalogue and the university website. The BSBF programme framework includes programme aims, objectives and programme intended learning outcomes and support the college's mission, vision and its strategic plan. The SER clarifies that AU aspires 'to promote excellence in learning' and to meet 'the changing needs of its stakeholders' From interviews with senior management and staff, the Panel confirmed that the programme aims are developed to achieve the vision statements of the College and the University. The Panel appreciates that the aims of the programme are clearly stated and well-aligned with the vision and mission of the College and the University.

2.2 The BSBF programme consists of 132 credit hours distributed over 44 courses. The curriculum of the BSBF programme is well-organized to provide academic progression year-on-year and course-by-course, with suitable workloads for students. The BSBF programme is structured to enable students to get their degree in four academic years. The programme has gone through a number of reviews last of which was during the academic year 2013-2014. This review resulted in many changes that were introduced to the programme such as adding (STAT202), (BANK330), (FINC328), (FINC427), (ETHC391) and (BFRM498). Furthermore, to ensure linkage between theory and practice the curriculum of the BSBF was referenced to two external reference points; Chartered Financial Analysts CFA Level-1 and Professional Risk Management (PRM) certification programmes. The following courses related to banking (BANK220), (BANK302), (BANK320), (BANK321), (BANK401), (BANK410) provide practical components and understanding of financial institutions and the legal environment in which they operate. Moreover, the following finance courses (FINC310), (FINC320), (FINC321), (FINC421) and (FINC431) place more emphasis on financial theory and deliver the required quantitative component of the programme. The Panel recommends to set (FINC421/ Investment Course) and (FINC 310/ Essentials of Corporate Finance) as prerequisites for (FINC431)/ Portfolio Management) to facilitate the delivery of the FINC431 course. The subject content of the syllabus as presented each year reflects the development of more complex concepts in advanced courses. In the fourth year students take (BFRM498) to formulate their research project proposal before completing the graduation project (BANK499). The Panel' interviews with students and the structure of the programme reveal that there is a general satisfaction with students' workload. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum is well-organized to

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demonstrate academic progression, a balance between knowledge and skills, and theory and practice with suitable workloads for students. Notwithstanding the above, interviewed students and alumni expressed the need to introduce an elective Arabic business terminology course to benefit those who join the government sector. The Panel suggests that the Department consider addressing this issue.

2.3   The Self-Evaluation Report indicates that there are five breadth courses (BANK220, BANK302, BANK320, FINC201 and FINC310) and eight depth courses (FINC320, FINC321, FINC421, FINC431, BANK321, BANK330, BANK401 and BANK410) which are consistent with similar programmes, locally and internationally. Course Specifications were provided to the Panel. These specifications follow a unified template detailing the list of topics to be covered, Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), teaching methods, assessment methods and their alignments to specific CILOs along with contact details of the instructor. Furthermore, the College has recently introduced Bloomberg trading terminals to introduce a practical component to its programme. The Panel studied the provided course syllabus and notes that the course syllabi are regularly up-dated to maintain currency and relevance of the materials to support delivery of the programme; and encourages the Department to continue with its current practice during which emerging business practices are incorporated in the syllabus. The Panel appreciates that the syllabus reflects current norms and trends in the discipline and has sufficient breadth and depth to support the delivery of the programme.

2.4   The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are outlined in the programme specification. The programme has 13 PILOs divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding (A1-A3), subject-specific skills (B1-B3), critical thinking skills (C1-C3), and general and transferrable skills (D1-D4). Staff interviewed clarified that the PILOs were developed to ensure that they are aligned and cover all programme aims and objectives. The Panel notes that the programme team has clear understanding about the PILOs and how these PILOs support the delivery of the programme aims and objectives. The Panel is satisfied that the PILOs are suitable for the programme type and its level. Examples include the emphasis on knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills (problem solving and analysing), transferable skills (presentations, teamwork and leadership) and values (such as business ethics and societal responsibility/engagement). The Panel appreciates that the Programme ILOs are clearly stated and aligned to the programme aims and objectives.

2.5   Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are clearly stated in the course specifications. CILOs are mapped to the programme ILOs, its aims and objectives. The SER presents a Curriculum Skills Map which shows how each course ILO contributes to the overall programme learning outcomes. The Panel studied the

mapping and noted that there are a few courses that are mapped against all PILOs. The Panel suggests that the College revise the contribution of these courses in the curriculum skills map to ensure a more selective mapping of these courses to the PILOs. Staff interviewed clarified that they have embraced problem solving, presentation skills, teamwork, computational and analytical skills in the BSBF programme to ensure that graduates are able to face workplace challenges and acquire the desired learning outcomes. The Panel acknowledges that in general the CILOs are well-drafted and match course contents and levels.

2.6   The SER and the Guidelines of Internship Programme documents, clarify that the BSBF programme includes an internship course (INTR400) allocated six credit hours with a minimum of 180 working hours over a period of eight weeks. The Panel is of the view that the allocated credit hours for the internship is higher than the expected norms and recommends that the College revise it. During interviews, staff clarified that students have to complete 90 credit hours of the programme requirements to be eligible to register for the internship course. According to the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Internship Programme students are required to submit bi-weekly reports and a final report. The course specification clarifies that the internship programme enables students to link theory with practice. Although the SER indicates that the internship course is mandatory, it also states that under certain circumstances students can elect to take two elective courses (three credit hours each) instead of taking the internship course. However, no information is provided on how the College ensure that the outcome of these courses is equivalent to the outcome of the internship course. During interviews with staff, the Panel was informed that students preferred the two elective courses option as 12% of the students enrolled are already employed, and the market conditions offers limited internship opportunities. Moreover, there are cases where students can be exempted from the internship course. However, the conditions for exemption are not set out in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship. The Panel also noted that the internship course is not included in the eight semester study plan although the two elective courses which are taken as a substitute for the internship course are mentioned in the plan. The Panel recommends that the College revise the contribution of the internship course and specify reasons for exemption to ensure equivalent learning outcomes are achieved amongst all students despite the options they take.

2.7   AU has a Teaching and Learning Plan which documents the range of teaching methods that is used to suit the delivery of the programme in order to achieve its intended learning outcomes. Staff interviewed clarified that a variety of teaching methods is used including group discussions and debates, practical sessions facilitated by external guests from the industry and independent learning by surfing the internet and the library resources including electronic databases. These methods were also confirmed during the Panel's interviews with students and alumni. To

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further enhance the delivery of the BSBF programme, the Panel recommends that the Department consider using additional softwares related to banking and finance such as Bank Management Simulation and Advanced Excel Financial Forecasting Modelling. From the site visit, it was clear that there is a strong commitment from the programme team to encourage students to engage with the different teaching methods utilised. This was evident in a number of courses where case studies, research methods and independent study are incorporated. Examples include courses such as (FINC499), (BANK401) and (BANK499). During the site visit, the Panel examined samples of the BSBF course specifications and noted that the Teaching and Learning Plan is consistently implemented; and the assessment criteria used reflected these methods. The Panel acknowledges that the Teaching and Learning Plan supports the achievement of the course ILOs and the programme aims and ILOs. The Panel appreciates that the programme team applies a range of pedagogical approaches to support students' different learning needs.

2.8 AU has developed standard assessment manuals for all courses to ensure the level of students' achievement. These manuals are well-communicated to students and academic staff to ensure transparency and equity in the treatment of students. The assessment policy also requires giving timely feedback to the students. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction with the constructive written feedback provided by staff. The Panel appreciates that constructive feedback is provided to students on timely bases. Staff interviewed clarified that the assessment tools include formative and summative methods and are divided into course work (60%) and the final examinations (40%). Course work includes quizzes, assignments, presentations, case studies and worksheets. During interviews with staff and students, the Panel noted that there are procedures for students to appeal their grades and they are well-informed about it. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that the Student Handbook does not include a section detailing all aspects of assessment. The Panel encourages the College to address this issue. Furthermore, there are marking guidelines for both mid-term and final examinations and there is a developed policy on the use of both internal and external moderation which was confirmed during interviews with staff and the BSBF external examiners/assessors. The Panel appreciates that there are transparent and fair policies for student assessment that states how assessment is linked to the ILOs and is well-known to both faculty and students.

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

- The aims of the programme are clearly stated and well-aligned with the vision and mission of the College and the University.
- The curriculum is well-organized to demonstrate academic progression, a balance between knowledge and skills, and theory and practice with suitable workloads for students.

- The syllabus reflects current norms and trends in the discipline and has sufficient breadth and depth to support the delivery of the programme.
- The programme intended learning outcomes are clearly stated and aligned to the programme aims and objectives.
- A range of pedagogical approaches is applied by staff to support students' different learning needs.
- Constructive feedback is provided to students.
- There are transparent and fair policies for assessment that are well-known to both faculty and students and provide opportunity for students to appeal.

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

- set both the Investment (FINC421) course and Essentials of Corporate Finance (FINC 310) course as prerequisites for the Portfolio Management (FINC431) course
- revise the number of credit hours allocated for the internship course
- revise the contribution of the internship course to the programme and specify reasons for exemption to ensure equivalent learning outcomes are achieved amongst all students despite the options they take
- consider expanding the range of softwares used that are related to banking and finance.

2.11   **Judgement**

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

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3. 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.

3.1 AU has an overall university admission policy which stipulates a provision of acquiring a secondary school certificate or its equivalent for admission to its undergraduate programmes. However, no minimum score is specified for the high school certificate. There is an English Language placement test for all students prior to registration in the degree programme. Applicants with international tests such as IELTS or TOEFL are exempted from the English Language test. The Panel is concerned that no exact cut-off marks are given for the secondary education score, the score of the English Language placement test and the score of IELTS or TOEFL to be exempted from the university English Language placement test. Applicants holding high secondary certificates older than five years are considered mature students and are required to pass, in addition to the English Language placement test, an examination in Mathematics. Transfer students are accepted in the programme if they have successfully completed at least one semester in another recognised institution. A maximum of 66% of the courses can be transferred if the applicant scores at least a 'C' grade in those courses. The Panel recommends that AU clearly state its requirements for the high school score and placement tests and make them available to all its stakeholders.

3.2 The Panel studied the profile of the admitted students to the BSBF programme and noted that in general it matches the programme aims. These profiles incorporate information on educational background of students, gender, nationality and their Cumulative GPAs in the secondary school certificate. The Panel notes that the high school score for the admitted students ranges between 62% to 98%, which is acceptable. After studying the admitted students' profile, the Panel noted that students from Arts, Science, Commercial and Technical secondary school tracks are being admitted to the programme. However, through interview sessions, the Panel was not provided with clear systematic approach on the additional support provided to students from different tracks to help strengthen their background where needed when admitted to the programme. The Panel recommends that the College conduct a study to evaluate students' profile especially the ones who are not coming from the Commercial or Science tracks against their academic performance and progress to ensure their success. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that the College clearly state actions taken to prepare those students to join the BSBF programme.

3.3 The Panel noted that there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the programmes in the College of Business and Finance and is in accordance with the By-Laws. The Chairperson of Department reports to the Dean of

the Business and Finance College and manages the day-to-day responsibilities of the programme. There are clearly stated responsibilities for the Chairperson and faculty members that interviewed staff were well-informed about. The Panel is satisfied that the programme is well-managed. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned with the long list of responsibilities assigned to the Chairperson as will be discussed under Indicator 4.

3.4   There are eight faculty members contributing to the delivery of the BSBF programme. All of them have a wide range of specialisms with a minimum of 10 years median of teaching experience. The SER presents the academic ranks of the staff as Professor (1), Associate Professor (2), Assistant Professor (2) and lecturers (3); in addition to one lecturer from another department. These staff members are also responsible for delivering other programmes offered by the University. Based on the staff members' involvement in the teaching of the programme, the student-to-staff ratio was reported in the SER as 6:1; over the last four years. The CVs of the academic staff who are teaching on the programme confirmed that there is a diversified range of specialisations suitable for the delivery of the programme. The Panel was provided with a list of all research papers conducted by the academic staff and noted that faculty members in general are involved in different research activities and that the topics are relevant to the discipline. The Panel acknowledges the appropriateness of the qualifications and areas of specialisation of the faculty who teach on the BSBF programme.

3.5   AU has well-documented procedures related to recruitment, appraisal and promotion of staff. The SER indicates a proactive approach to the recruitment of staff led by an initial manpower plan prepared by the Chairperson of the Department and the Department Council, consolidated by the Dean of College and the Appointment and Promotion Committee. The Committee's recommendations are passed to the University Council for final approval. Once approved, a letter is sent to the candidate from the President's office. During interviews, staff confirmed that the Chairperson of the Department is responsible for developing the work plan and advising on the detailed requirements for programme delivery. The SER highlighted that four academic staff were recruited for the College of Business and Finance during the previous two academic years. New staff members are inducted by the Human Resources Department. During interviews, staff members confirmed their high satisfaction with the induction programme. The Panel appreciates that there is a well-functioning induction programme for newly appointed staff. The Panel noted that the retention rate in the last two years was 87.5%. AU has an annual formal appraisal system. The appraisal form consists of self-evaluation, student evaluation, department chairperson evaluation, quality of research and teaching and contributions to community. The Panel notes that staff appraisal is undertaken regularly. There is a clear policy for promotion that stipulates the criteria needed and

the procedures followed for promotion. The Panel was informed that two academic staff had been promoted from the College in the last two academic years. The Panel studied the sample of promotion file provided and was satisfied with the process. The Panel appreciates that there are clear procedures for recruitment, appraisal and promotion which are sufficient to retain staff and support the delivery of the programme.

3.6   The SER presents information on the Admission and Registration software system (ADREG) that is used to underpin decision-making related to admissions and registration, withdrawals, number of sections and courses to be offered. Interviewed staff indicated that training on ADREG was provided to facilitate its use. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with evidence to show that the ADREG system plays a vital role when it comes to making decisions related to programmes management, student progression and also for facilitating the early identification and support for 'at risk' students. During the site visit, the Panel had the opportunity to view the operation of ADREG. The Panel notes that AU has a dedicated team to add new features to the ADREG system if/when required which makes ADREG a very useful system for the effective running of the programme. The Panel appreciates that the ADREG system is utilized to provide appropriate range of reports to support decision-making.

3.7   The SER clarifies that AU has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of student records. According to this policy students' results, students' records, course attendance, transcripts, change in grade, backup procedure and archiving functions are placed solely on ADREG. The Panel also learned from the interviews that AU has a Disaster Recovery Plan for which data is backed-up on daily, weekly, monthly and yearly basis to avoid any potential loss of data through disasters such as fire. There are two backup systems of records: on-site and off-site. There are also arrangements to ensure the security of records through a defined authorization mechanism and the usage of anti-virus and firewalls. Users are provided with unique user-names and passwords for logging onto the ADREG system. Staff interviewed clarified before marks are approved, they are verified by the instructor, the Department Chairperson and the College Dean. Change in grade according to the SER requires multi-level verification by the Department Chairperson, the College Dean and the Dean of Students' Affairs. In addition, there is a quality assurance officer specifically assigned to verify the accuracy of students' records. The Panel is satisfied with the arrangements in place to protect students' records. Interviews with academic and administrative staff confirmed the implementation of the approval and verification procedures. During interviews, the Panel was informed that physical records, final examinations scripts and student files are kept in a locked room. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results.

3.8 Following a tour of the university campus during the site visit, the Panel visited the teaching halls which are equipped with electronic projectors, computer laboratories, the university library and other facilities. During the tour to the library, the Panel reviewed the range of resources available to students including books, e-books, journals, databases and e-resources which students have access to on and off campus. The Panel notes that there is a reasonable collection of hardcopy titles, e-books and databases in the AU library and encourages the College to continue increasing the library holdings related to the different business specializations. The Panel notes the limited private study spaces available for students and that the bookshop is located inside the library. Therefore, the Panel recommends that AU move the bookshop from the library to allow more space for students in the library and to ensure that the library is not crowded especially at the beginning of the academic semester. During the campus tour, the Panel met the library staff, who explained the services that are provided to students. During interviews with senior staff, the Panel learned that the University provides internet services, email services, troubleshooting support, software installation, and access to the university services to all students and faculty. All courses of the BSBF programme are available on 'Moodle' and students get training on how to use it. In addition, there are 11 computer laboratories where each laboratory can accommodate 20 students. These laboratories are used by all programmes offered by the University. The Panel visited some computer laboratories and noted that the College assigns a specialized technician in Information Technology (IT) to help the instructor during class time. The College has also ensured that within laboratories timetables there are free hours that are posted on the laboratories doors where students can have access to work on their projects or assignments. The Panel is satisfied with the arrangements in place to ensure that sufficient resources are available to all students.

3.9 AU uses ADREG system to track the usage of resources in laboratories as well as classroom usage. E-resources (databases) are tracked through database logs in the library. These logs are generated by the library staff and are used to inform decisions on whether to renew subscriptions to databases. Tracking reports of 'Moodle' usage can easily be generated upon demand. The Panel was provided with minutes of meetings where these reports were discussed and acted upon. The Panel is satisfied with the current tracking system which allows the University to evaluate the utilizations of the laboratories and the e-resources.

3.10 During the site visit, the Panel noted that there are support measures in place for students, which are provided in the laboratories, library, counselling services, academic guidance and support, and for the use of e-resources. 'Moodle' plays a very crucial role in all this. All courses in the programme are available on 'Moodle' to support e-learning. During interviews with management and staff and while visiting the resources, the Panel noted that special measures are taken to support students

with certain disabilities by providing ease of access. There is also a Career Office that provides guidance to students on how to secure internships and permanent jobs. Moreover, every student is assigned an academic advisor, who provides continuous and necessary support to students in the course of their studies and there is a student counsellor who addresses non-academic problems on which students may require guidance. However, the Panel noted that the Counselling Support Unit is located at a high exposed area. The Panel recommends that AU relocate the Student Counselling Support Unit to a more appropriate location to maintain students' privacy. During interviews, student expressed their high satisfaction with the support and academic advising services that are made available to them. This was also confirmed through outcomes of students surveys. The Panel appreciates the range and quality of support services that are made available to students.

3.11   Orientation is provided to all newly admitted students as well as those transferred from other institutions at the beginning of every academic year. The orientation programme includes sessions on university-wide processes where aspects of the AU Student Guide and AU Catalogue are discussed, as well as college-level and programme-specific processes and requirements, including a discussion of the BSBF programme specification. In interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the efficacy of the orientation programme in providing valuable information about AU's policies and regulations. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements of the induction programme. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that students who are unable to attend the orientation programme usually receive copies of the Student Guide and other documents to read on their own. The Panel encourages the College to put proper arrangements in place to ensure that all newly admitted and transferred students undergo the orientation process prior to the commencement of lectures.

3.12   There is a mechanism in place to provide academic support for students, and particularly at-risk students. Part of the academic advising role involves monitoring academic progress of students. According to AU's Student at-risk Policy, students are to be monitored when their GPA falls within a GPA range stipulated in the Catalogue and identified (red flagged) by the ADREG system. According to the AU Catalogue, this minimum GPA depends on the total number of credits that has been completed by the student. Notifications of at-risk cases are sent by email to the student academic advisor, course instructors, the University Counsellor and the Department Chairperson. The Panel found evidence of minutes of meetings and interventions that have been taken to support identified at-risk students. The Panel appreciates the mechanisms that are in place to timely identify and support BSBF students who are at risk of academic failure.

3.13   AU has a learning environment that facilitates opportunities for students to develop themselves through informal learning such as the extra -curricular activities

including the AU Magazine, Psychology Club and charity fundraisers. It is also possible for students to attend a semester of one year abroad as an exchange student with Institute Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) in France or through the Brunel 2+2 exchange programme. This provides students with an opportunity to understand different cultures and to improve their language skills. The learning environment is enhanced through field trips, visits to foreign countries, including GCC countries, along with the arrangement of special events (e.g. career day, culture day, exhibitions). The Panel acknowledges the faculty's endeavours to provide opportunities for expanding students' informal learning experience.

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

- There is a well-functioning induction programme for newly appointed staff.
- There are clear procedures for recruitment, appraisal and promotion of staff which are sufficient to retain staff and support the delivery of the programme.
- The management information system used (ADREG) provides appropriate range of reports that are utilized to support decision-making.
- There are policies and procedures, consistently implemented, to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- There is a range of high quality support services that are made available to students.
- Mechanisms are in place to timely identify and support BSBF students who are at risk of academic failure.

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

- clearly state the requirements score for the high school certificate, English proficiency tests and university admission tests; and make them available to all stakeholders
- conduct a study to evaluate students' profile especially the ones who are not coming from the Science or Commercial tracks against their academic performance; and clearly state actions to be taken to facilitate their enrolment in the programme
- relocate the Student Counselling Support Unit to a more appropriate location to maintain students' privacy
- move the bookshop from the library to ensure more study spaces are available to students.

3.16   Judgement

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

4.   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

4.1   Ahlia University has defined 12 generic graduate attributes and 10 specific ones related to the College of Business and Finance to enable students to face workplace challenges. These are embedded in the programme learning outcomes which are delivered by mapping the course syllabus and their ILOs to the PILOs. Whilst, the graduate attributes are not explicitly mapped to the PILOs, these are covered through various means of delivery and assessments. The Panel is satisfied that the graduate attributes have been incorporated into the statement of the various PILOs and are translated to the course level through the curriculum skills map. The Panel notes that the interviewed staff show understanding of these attributes and their validation through assessments. Although the Panel appreciates the clearly stated graduate attributes that are embedded within the programme specification; yet the Panel encourages the College to explicitly link the stated graduate attributes to the PILOs.

4.2   There is a benchmarking policy developed by AU and utilized by the BSBF programme team to benchmark the programme locally, regionally and internationally to ensure that the quality and academic standards of the programme are comparable with programmes offered at various universities. The programme was benchmarked against five international universities, one regional along with a local one. The scope of the benchmarking covered areas related to programme structure and design, core courses and elective courses. Moreover, the programme has used two external reference points, the CFA level-1 examination and the Professional Risk Management Certificate, to align its curricular content. The Benchmark Study of the BSBF programme provides evidence that informal benchmarking of the programme has been done. These comparisons have been done *via* internet surfing and publically available information. It is worth noting that the results of the benchmarking are not incorporated as it has been done recently. The Panel notes the efforts of the College to benchmark its BSBF programme with local, regional and international universities and professional bodies. However, the Panel recommends that the College establish formal relationships with the institutions it wants to benchmark the BSBF programme with; and expand the benchmarking activities to cover more regional universities.

4.3   AU has developed an Assessment Manual that is regularly reviewed and communicated to staff and students. The University has also developed a policy for multi-section courses and Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project all of which aim to ensure equity and transparency of the assessment policy and procedures. The

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Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) is responsible to overview the implementation of these policies and procedures in coordination with the Department. The SER clarifies that the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee continuously receives feedback from the CAQA on the implementation of these assessment procedures and conducts periodical reviews with the aim of improvement whenever needed. Staff interviewed clarified that assessment procedures are subject to regular reviews and are carefully designed to be in line with the CILOs. Moreover, students' grades are approved by the Chairperson before being published. During the Panel's site visit a number of syllabus and course materials were provided to the Panel and it was evident that staff members use a blend of assessments which tests both theory and practice. Interviewed students, indicated that a variety of assessment methods is used such as case studies, presentations, assignments, written examinations and group discussions. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the University has clearly stated procedures for internal verification/moderation and external assessor/examiner. Staff interviewed indicated that feedback is provided on all types of assessments and there is a software to check students' work against plagiarism. This was confirmed by interviewed students. The Panel appreciates that the assessment methods and procedures are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.

4.4 AU has developed a systematic process which is implemented by the BSBF programme team to ensure the alignment of assessments with course learning outcomes. Each course has a designated verifier who is responsible to cross-reference the CILOs with the mid-term and final examinations. External moderation is also utilized to ensure that final examinations properly assess the achievements of the learning outcomes. The Panel is satisfied that AU has developed an ILO Assessment Matrix to enable a sufficient alignment. Moreover, interviewed faculty members indicated that they discuss the analysis of students' attainment levels of course ILOs as presented in each course evaluation report. During the site visit, the Panel reviewed the provided course specifications and noted that assessment methods are set out in line with their relevant CILOs, title of the topic, and the specific teaching method and the weightings of the different assessment used. The Panel notes that both formative and summative assessments are used. Interviewed staff clarified that they attended several workshops to enhance their understanding of the ILOs, CILOs and PILOs. The Panel acknowledges that the College has effective mechanism to ensure that assessment is aligned with the CILOs to enhance the academic standards of the BSBF graduates.

4.5 The College of Business and Finance follows AU's internal verification procedure which is applied to the BSBF programme. All course syllabi and final examinations are subjected to internal verification. This is done by a faculty member who is

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nominated by the Department Chairperson two weeks before the commencement of the semester. The internal verifier has to fill in a form entitled 'Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specifications'. The feedback of the internal verifier is submitted to the course instructor who in turn is responsible for incorporating any necessary changes prior to distributing the course specification to students. The SER provides a comprehensive description of the duties of the internal verifier. During interviews, the Panel learned that the internal verifier has to verify final examinations where he/she has to evaluate the relevance of the questions to the course level, structure of the question paper, marking scheme or rubrics and the appropriateness of the assessment tools to measure the achievement of the learning outcomes by adhering to the unified ILO Assessment Matrix. The internal verifier has to submit 'Internal Verification of Final Examination' form to the Department Chairperson. Post moderation is conducted by the Internal Moderation Committee which is formed to moderate the results of the final examination scripts including scripts with high, average and low marks. This Committee consists of three members, the Department Chairperson, the instructor or course coordinator in the case of multi-sectional courses and a third faculty member. Finally, the whole process is monitored by AU's Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA). The Panel notes that other tools of assessments, which are allocated more than 40% of the total mark, are not subjected to internal verification. The Panel recommends that the College expand its internal verification procedure to cover all forms of assessment.

4.6   AU has an external assessment system which is implemented by the College of Business and Finance. The SER clarifies that external moderation is done annually for every academic programme and the external assessors' are nominated by the College Council over a period of two years.   AU's Assessment Manual provides a comprehensive description of the role of the external assessors. From interviews, the Panel learned that external assessors have to produce a detailed report on programme specification, course syllabus, the linkage between the course and programme ILOs, validity and reliability of the final examination questions and the level of its difficulty along with scrutinising samples of final examination scripts with high, average and low marks. The feedback of the external assessor is reviewed by the Department Chairperson who in turn submits the report to the University's Vice President for Academic Affairs and/or Assessment Committee as appropriate. The external assessors' recommendations are taken into account in the following academic year. Examples include (BANK410) and (FINC421) where ILOs were scaled up and assessments were realigned to the ILOs. From interviews with staff and after examining samples of external assessors' report; the Panel appreciates that there are processes to ensure that external assessors' feedback is disseminated and acted upon. However, the Panel recommends that AU expand the external moderation process to cover more types of assessments.

4.7   Samples of students' assessed coursework from different courses were provided during the site visit. The provided sample clearly shows that students' work is of an appropriate standard and is consistent with similar programmes offered locally, regionally and internationally. The Panel noted that assessment tools are well-aligned with the CILOs. The Panel also examined the provided sample of graduation projects and noted that the level of these projects are in general of an acceptable level. During interviews with staff, they clarified that plagiarism is considered as one of the academic misconduct; therefore, students are expected to follow AU's regulation and check their submitted work through 'Turnitin' software to avoid plagiarising. Interviewed students confirmed that faculty members do use it to check their submitted work. The Panel acknowledges that the level of student work is appropriate to the programme type, level and ILOs.

4.8   AU uses both internal and external independent scrutiny in their effort to ensure that BSBF graduates meet programme aims and ILO as expressed in students' results, graduation projects and grade distribution. The BSBF programme aims to train students to become financial professionals in commercial and investment banking or in finance treasury/treasury departments in government organizations. The SER states that 'in the past three years, 38% of the programme graduates had a Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of at least 3.0 and 20% graduated with distinction with CGPA above 3.5. The rest and the majority graduated in the CGPA range of 2.5-2.99 which falls in the 'good plus' category.' The Panel notes that the CGPAs of BSBF students are positively skewed, but within acceptable limits. The quality of the programme graduates is further confirmed by graduate exit surveys, graduate acceptance in international graduate programmes and the fact that some students have published research papers alone or with faculty members. The Panel appreciates the level of students' achievement that resulted in producing published research work.

4.9   Statistics provided by the BSBF programme in the SER indicate that out of the 443 admitted students since the programme inception, 19.9% have discontinued their studies and the remaining 80.1% have either graduated or are currently enrolled. The mean length of study of BSBF graduates since the 2010-2011 academic year is 4.09 years with a standard deviation of 0.7 years. The programme graduated 24, 24 and 23 students during the academic years 2010-2011, 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 respectively with an average length of study of 3.6, 4.2 and 4.5 years for the same period. Since the programme inception, the average yearly retention rate was 78% and has risen to 94% in the 2013-2014 academic years. The graduates' destination shows that 79.4% proceeded to appropriate employment in their field of study. The Panel recommends that the College conduct a study to investigate the reasons for the high attrition rate.

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4.10   The BSBF programme has a work-based learning component (INTR400) which is assessed and managed through relevant policies and procedures. A supervision form follows closely the progress of the students. As per the SER, the cumulative number of students who completed their work-based learning since 2009-2010 is 73 students comprising 92.4% of the total number of graduates in the programme. In the current 2013-2014 academic year, 85% of the students eligible for internship have already registered for the internship course. The Panel studies samples of practical training reports and noted that they were comparable to similar reports regionally and internationally. The Panel is satisfied with the guidance provided to students during the internship period. Interviewed students and alumni indicated that they are highly satisfied with the internship programme to the extent that some of them were recruited in the organizations where they did their training. Both students and alumni praised the college's effort in selecting well-reputed organizations for their work-based training. The Panel acknowledges the guidance provided to students during the internship period.

4.11   AU has well-stated guidelines on the students' graduation project (BANK/FINC499) to govern its implementation. The guidelines cover the processes for the undergraduate project, roles and responsibilities of the various parties, examination and deadlines. According to the SER, guidelines have been periodically rewritten over the past five years by an *ad hoc* committee for student undergraduate and post-graduate projects of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC). During interviews, students and alumni confirmed that the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Project are clear, transparent and well-implemented. Several parties are involved in evaluating the students' projects including the student's supervisor, the Department Chairperson, the Internal Examiner and the Examination Committee. Each student is assigned a project supervisor who is a full-time faculty member with three years of teaching experience at university level. The project supervisor's role is to provide academic guidance and support and facilitate the writing of the graduation project. Two internal examiners are assigned to reach an independent judgement on the quality of the written project and the oral examination. The Examination Committee finalises the assessment and inform the student of the result, and typically consists of the supervisor and the two other internal examiners. It is worth noting that students are obliged to take (BFRM498) course before registering for (BANK/FINC499) course. As the former is a research method course where students get the necessary training on how to formulate a research topic and conduct research while the latter is the graduation project course where students write about their projects and results reached based on their findings. During interviews, staff clarified that the graduation project requires students to integrate and apply prior knowledge and skills from other courses which they have undertaken as part of the programme. During interviews with students and alumni, it was noted that students have a great degree of freedom in the selection of the topic for their projects and that

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they are given clear guidance on the supervisory arrangements. The Chairperson of the Department tracks the supervision of the undergraduate project through ADREG. All submitted projects go through an anti-plagiarism software. The Panel examined a number of graduation projects and noted that the level of these projects is in general acceptable. Interviewed alumni expressed their appreciation for the support they received from their supervisors from the time they choose their topic until they submit their projects. The Panel appreciates that there are guidelines for the undergraduate project which are clear, transparent and well-implemented.

4.12   The College of Business and Finance has established a College External Advisory Board (CEAB) since 2013 and consists of representatives from business leaders from both private and public sectors and has defined clear roles and responsibilities for them. Minutes of Meetings and interviews with members of the Board suggest that it is active and that the College takes their role seriously. The Panel was of the view that their collective expertise was valuable to provide the necessary external professional guidance to AU's business programmes. During interview, it was evident that the CEAB has already provided the academic staff with a number of recommendations and suggestions to align the BSBF programme with contemporary business practices in Bahrain. The Panel appreciates the active involvement of the CEAB in providing constructive feedback to improve the BSBF programme in order to meet the requirements of the labour market needs.

4.13   AU's Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) conducts two annual surveys to measure the level of satisfaction towards its graduates and employers. These surveys are analysed to provide an effective feedback on the quality of the programme and academic standards of its graduates. Results of the two recent surveys analysis confirmed that alumni and employers are satisfied with the programme and its content. The employer survey results indicate that about 87% of the employers are satisfied with the quality of the graduates and are willing to recruit more BSBF graduates The survey results also indicate that 82% of the alumni believe that the BSBF programme contributed to their personal development. The Panel also conducted interviews with employers and alumni and was pleased to note the very enthusiastic response from both groups of stakeholders. Interviewed Employers provided very positive feedback on the quality of the graduates and the academic preparation and skills which students acquired to prepare them for the world of work. The employers also indicated that the students are very competent in terms of analytical, communicative, and leadership skills. The alumni were positive when reflecting on their education experience on the BSBF programme and complimentary of the efforts of the academic staff who provided them with an excellent learning experience. The Panel appreciates the high level of employers and alumni satisfaction with the BSBF programme and its delivery.

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

- There are clearly stated graduate attributes that are embedded within the programme specification.
- There are clear assessment procedures and methods which are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.
- The level of students' achievement as illustrated in their published research work.
- There are processes in place to ensure that external assessors' feedback is disseminated and acted upon.
- The level of students' achievement has resulted in producing published research work.
- There are guidelines for the undergraduate project which are clear, transparent and well-implemented.
- There is a College External Advisory Board which is actively involved in providing constructive feedback that is used to enhance the programme.
- Employers and alumni are highly satisfied with the BSBF programme and its delivery.

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

- establish formal relationships with the institutions the College wants to benchmark the BSBF programme with; and expand the benchmarking activities to cover more regional universities
- expand the internal verification procedure to cover all forms of assessment
- expand the external moderation process to cover more types of assessments
- conduct a study to investigate the reasons for students' high attrition rate.

4.16   **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates.**

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5. 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.

5.1 AU Policies and Procedures Manual contains a wide array of institutional policies and procedures ranging from human resources, accounting, purchasing, ICT and safety to general administration. The Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of policies and procedures across the University. From submitted documents and interviews with academic, administration and QA staff, the Panel is satisfied that the institution's policies are applied effectively with the involvement of the staff. The Faculty Handbook summarises the university policies and procedures while the 2010 University By-Laws provides more details of these policies. The Quality Assurance Manual which was developed in 2012 provides a 'one-stop- shop' for policies and procedures relating to quality assurance. The manual includes policies and procedures on admissions and development, programmes review as well as regulations pertaining to academic study. The Panel appreciates that there is an implemented mechanism to ensure consistent application of the policies and procedures across the programme.

5.2 From the SER and interviews with senior faculty, the Panel learned that the BSBF programme is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Chairperson of the Department, who assumes responsibility for coordination of the programme and its quality and represents the programme in the CAQA. The Department Council headed by the Chairperson evaluates the options for effective decision-making concerning the BSBF programme. The Chairperson represents the Department in the College Council and preserves the interest of the BSBF Department and programme. The BSBF Departmental Programme Review Committee serves as a platform to review the programme and generate new ideas; and according to the SER, 'the Departmental Chairperson interacts regularly with a range of stakeholders who also provide a wide range of different types and sources of information pertaining to the programme and its management.' The Panel also interviewed academic and administrative staff, including representatives from CAQA, who provided the Panel with evidence of effective leadership of the BSBF programme. The Panel acknowledges that the BSBF programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates a responsible leadership. However, as stated under Indicator 2, the Panel is concerned with the high administrative load exerted on the Chairperson and recommends to address this issue.

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5.3   AU has developed a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual which was developed in 2012 to provide 'a one-stop shop' for policies and procedures relating to quality assurance.   As previously noted, the CAQA has the overall responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the quality management system at the University to ensure consistent implementation and quality delivery of the programme and is supported by an array of university-level committees and structures that complemented the CAQA's work. The Panel found that both the College Council and Department Councils play a significant role to complement the work of the CAQA. The Panel was provided with evidence of several meetings to show the involvement of these structures in monitoring and evaluating the quality management system in relation to programmes offered within the College. The Panel appreciates that the quality management system is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.

5.4   The CAQA conducts regular training workshops to acquaint staff with the policies and procedures pertaining to the programmes offered by the College in particular, and best practice approaches in teaching and learning in general. The Panel established that the training workshops that were conducted between 2011 and 2014 were very well-attended by staff. The QA policies and procedures are also made available on the university intranet for easy access by staff. During interviews with the academics and support staff, the Panel noted that they have a good understanding of the implemented quality assurance arrangements in the College and their role in ensuring effectiveness of provision. The Panel appreciates the commitment of the AU staff in ensuring the quality of delivery of the BSBF programme.

5.5   The policy and procedures for the development of new programmes are contained in the Policy on Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes and an accompanying Process for Developing and Reviewing Academic Programmes. The process of developing new programmes is typically initiated at the Department or College level following a needs assessment and feasibility study, and recommendations thereafter go through a series of approvals which eventually culminate at the University Council for approval before submission to the Higher Education Council for licensing. The Panel established that the College did not identify a need for establishing new programmes since the establishment of its current programmes and rather concentrated on improving the existing programmes. The Panel acknowledges the procedures that AU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes.

5.6   According to the SER internal programme evaluations are typically conducted at the beginning of each semester by the Department in collaboration with the CAQA and the TLAC. The process involves 'validation' of programme specifications and course

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syllabi in terms of learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, textbooks, and making use of an Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specification template and discussion of the analysis of students' attainment levels of course ILOs as presented in each course evaluation report. Moreover, student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester to generate feedback on teaching and learning. Minutes of meetings and interviews with the academic staff confirmed that the process of students' evaluation has led to many improvements in specific courses in the BSBF programme. The Panel notes the internal programme evaluation conducted at the end-of-semester through student surveys generates an ongoing and effective feedback on the quality of teaching. The Panel appreciates the adequacy of the arrangements for internal annual evaluation of the programme.

5.7   The AU Policy and Procedures for Developing, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes requires programmes in the College of Business and Finance to be comprehensively reviewed every three years. In terms of the policy, programme reviews are the remit of the Curriculum Review Committee with support from the TLAC and other related committees, and overseen by the CAQA. The process for reviewing the programme requires information from external reference points such as feedback from course tutors, alumni and employer surveys, benchmarking and market research studies, student evaluations and input from the College External Advisory Board. Documentation provided indicates that the review process benefited a lot from the collected feedback of all the stakeholders. The Panel found evidence of instances where programme review recommendations have been implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Examples include introducing a course in research methods (BFRM498) and a business ethics course (ETHC3910). The Panel appreciates the frequency and diligence with which the BSBF programme is periodically reviewed.

5.8   The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) periodically conducts surveys of AU students, alumni and employer. The student surveys tackle the quality of course offering and evaluations of instructors. Feedback collected from students' surveys flows to the University Council, College Council and Department Council for discussion. The alumni surveys collect information on the quality of the BSBF programme and the learning experience. In addition, the CAQA implements a 'Quality Periodic Programme Review and Utilization of Feedback' in order to ensure that feedback is utilized in improving the programme content and delivery. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with some of the recently conducted surveys and follow-up meetings and action plans that have emanated from these surveys. The Panel is satisfied with the dedication and enthusiasm of the CME staff in conducting these surveys.

5.9   AU has a dedicated unit, namely the Ahlia Training and Development Center (ATDC), which is responsible for the professional development of both academic and administration staff. The Panel confirmed that the Center has designed a formal staff development plan that seeks to address training and development needs of staff in order to arrange for suitable workshops. The Panel noted that the training programmes are also geared towards attainment of individual staff needs, and hence staff are able to attend workshops in areas that are unrelated to their normal course of duty. The ATDC has furthermore developed a template for evaluating the effectiveness of the workshops that have been presented. The Panel found evidence that many academic and administrative staff of the College of Business and Finance have attended workshops on topics such as the use of the ADREG system, 'Moodle', design and mapping of programme and course intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning and assessment methodologies, among others. The Panel appreciates the effective arrangements put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and non-academic staff.

5.10   The BSBF programme depends on its internal and external stakeholders to gather intelligence about the labour market needs. The College External Advisory Board members have extensive years of experience in Bahrain's labour market needs. Furthermore, Alumni Survey and Employer Survey are considered as vital tools when discussing the structure and the content of the BSBF programme. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of systematic formal methods used to assess labour market needs. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism for scoping labour market needs to enhance the BSBF programme design and its delivery.

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

- There is an implemented mechanism to ensure consistent application of the policies and procedures across the programme.
- The quality management system at AU is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- Ahlia University staff members are committed in ensuring the quality of delivery of the BSBF programme.
- There are adequate arrangements for the internal annual evaluation of the programme.
- There is a clearly stated policy for the periodical review of the programme that is diligently implemented.
- There is an effective arrangement put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and administrative staff.

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

- revise the workload of the Department Chairperson to ensure effective leadership is consistently provided
- develop and implement a formal mechanism for scoping labour market needs to enhance the BSBF programme design and its delivery.

5.13 **Judgement**

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

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6.   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/QQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

There is confidence in the Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance offered by the College of Business and Finance at Ahlia University.

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