National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing

College of Business and Finance

Ahlia University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 18 - 20 November 2014

HC056-C2-R056

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Acronyms

ADREG	Admission and Registration System
AU	Ahliya University
ATDC	Ahlia Training and Development Centre
BSAF	Bachelor's Degree in Accounting & Finance
BSBF	Bachelor's Degree in Banking & Finance
BSEF	Bachelor's Degree in Economics & Finance
BSMIS	Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System
BSMM	Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing
CAQA	Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CME	The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation
CRC	Curriculum Review Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
MBA	Master's Degree in Business Administration
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

PMBOK	Project Management Body of Knowledge
QA	Quality Assurance
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
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 programmes offered by the College of Business & Finance of Ahlia University was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place in November 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the College, these are: Bachelor's Degree in Economics & Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Banking & Finance (BSBF), Bachelor's Degree in Accounting & Finance, Bachelor's Degree in Management & Marketing, Master's Degree in Business Administration, Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the 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 reviews of programmes offered by its College of Business & Finance with the site visit taking place on 18 to 20 November 2014. In preparation for the review, AU conducted its College self-evaluation of all its

programmes 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's Degree in Management and Marketing programme. 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 Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing and the AU staff in general.

1.3   Overview of the College of Business and Finance

The 2013-2014 University Catalogue lists the College of Business and Finance as one of six Colleges of AU. The College offers undergraduate and postgraduate business programmes comprising four departments, namely Accounting and Economics, Management and Marketing, Banking and Finance, and Management Information Systems. The management structure of the College includes a Dean and an Associate Dean, and a Chairperson for each of the four departments. The College of Business and Finance of Ahlia University offers six programmes. Five of these are at the undergraduate level, namely: Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing; Bachelor's Degree in Economics and Finance; Bachelor's Degree in Banking and Finance; Bachelor's Degree in Accounting and Finance; and Bachelor's Degree in Management Information System. In addition, the Master's Degree in Business

Administration which is offered at the post-graduate level. At the time of the site visit, the total number of students in the College was1437 and the College employed 46 specialized faculty members contributing to all the programmes offered by the college.

1.4   Overview of the Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing

The Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing (BSMM) programme has been offered since the 2002-2003 academic year and was patterned on the programme offered by Brunel University. The BSMM programme is designed to prepare students for careers either in the field of a marketing management, or as a manager or supervisor in a variety of businesses, or as an entrepreneur, or posts in government. The BSMM programme had its first intake in February 2003, and graduated three students as its first batch in February 2005. In 2013-2014, 264 students were enrolled in the programme. Since 2002-2003, 148 students have graduated from the programme. Over 70% of the registered students are Bahrainis, with the majority of the remaining students being from the GCC countries, principally from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. There are nine full-time administration staff within the College who contribute to the programme and are supported by 22 full-time teaching staff as well as one part-time teaching staff.

1.5   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor's Degree in Management and Marketing

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 The College of Business and Finance has vision and mission statements that have been formulated in alignment with those of the University, with a focus on business education. There is a coherent academic planning framework for the BSMM programme that clearly sets out the aims of the programme. The programme aims are appropriate for the Programme title and are aligned with the vision and mission of the College of Business and Finance. During staff interviews, the Panel received confirmation that the programme aims are developed to achieve the vision statements of the College and the University. The Panel appreciates that a coherent academic planning framework has been designed for the BSMM programme and that the programme aims contribute to the vision and mission statement of the College of Business and Finance and the University

2.2 The BSMM programme is structured as a four year, eight semester programme consisting of 44 courses totalling 132 Credits, and incorporating an internship course equivalent to six credits. The first four semesters consist of five courses of three credits each. In the third year, this is raised to six courses of three credits each. Year four has only five courses per semester of three credits each, freeing up time for the undergraduate research project and internship. This constitutes a suitable and balanced workload. Of these 44 courses, six are university required compulsory core courses, constituting 18 credits; 12 are college requirements totalling 36 credits; and 24 are BSMM major required courses totalling 72 credits. This includes a mandatory three credit undergraduate project MAGT/MAKT 499, which is undertaken in year four. The remainder of the course credits are for Business Ethics and elective courses. There is a reasonable mix of management and marketing courses, with the elective courses enabling students to develop either a management or a marketing specialisation. The courses are organised to provide a clear and logical academic progression, with prerequisite courses scheduled for earlier semesters. From the SER and interviews with faculty, it is evident that linkages with professional bodies (Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), British Institute of Management, Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK)) and aligning the programme with their requirements is underway. Changes to courses in Marketing have been implemented to align with CIM professional requirements, while equivalent review processes have recently been initiated with respect to CIM and PMBOK. Such comparisons to professional bodies have also enhanced the practical skills component of the programme, which is noted with appreciation. The Panel notes with appreciation that the curriculum is appropriately organised in terms of progression, workload, and balance between theory and practice.

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2.3   As described in the SER, there are seven breadth courses, which expose students to a wide range of business functions as well as basic management skills and techniques, and twelve depth courses stipulated as required courses. These depth courses provide specialisation in either Marketing or Management and introduce more advanced concepts and techniques. Electives provide greater depth and breadth, and a degree of specialisation in either management or marketing. The mandatory undergraduate project MAGT/MAKT 499 also provides students with the opportunity to research a subject in greater depth. The syllabus provides a good balance of depth and breadth, as well as specialization versus core courses. Furthermore, interview sessions confirmed that the syllabus is kept relevant and is updated regularly as part of the Programme Review Committee's functioning. Minor changes are made on an ongoing basis, while more substantial changes would be undertaken, based on the results of the programme review that is conducted every three years. During interviews with faculty, examples were given of the inclusion of more current trends in the syllabus, such as that of social media in marketing in the MAKT 424 course and six-sigma awareness in the MAGT 414 course. The combination of a broad-based syllabus in management and marketing combined with more in-depth, specialist courses, should adequately prepare students for the workplace with some level of specialisation. Workplace readiness has also been enhanced through the use of the CIM Certification programme as an external reference point for the marketing component of the programme. The Panel notes with appreciation that the syllabus generally meets the requirements for a programme in the management and marketing fields in terms of its breadth, depth, relevance and currency.

2.4   Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are outlined in the programme specification and are classified into knowledge and understanding, subject specific skills, critical thinking skills, and general skills. The knowledge and understanding PILOs are generally stated to reflect the intent to keep abreast of the knowledge in the fields of management and marketing, including professional requirements. The PILOs related to subject specific skills focus on problem solving, modelling, designing, and applying various methods and tools. The content of these PILOs shows an understanding of the importance of problem solving, research and quantitative data analysis to the role of a general or marketing manager. However, it may be helpful to more clearly differentiate the two streams of the programme by separating out some of these PILOs. For example, the first part of B2 is clearly focused on the management stream while the latter half refers to the marketing stream. Critical thinking skills encompass analysis, synthesis and creativity. These are all important and relevant to this programme. What could be added as a fourth PILO is evaluative skills; given the decision making requirements of business, but this is loosely implied in each of these three PILOs. Finally, general skills encompass key requirements for managing and interacting with others in an effective,

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professional and ethical manner. Collectively, these PILOs are aligned to the programme objectives that encompass providing students with sufficient knowledge in the subject area, and a range of research, quantitative, and soft skills. The Programme Specification template provides a vehicle for aligning programme specifications with the mission of the College and is included in all course files that were reviewed, suggesting that students would also be familiar with this framework. The Panel is satisfied that the PILOs are clearly stated and collectively match the programme aims and objectives, and are appropriate to the nature of a management and marketing programme, as well as the level of the programme.

2.5   In all of the course files that were inspected during the site-visit, the university-wide template had been used to describe the course syllabi, including a clear statement of the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs). University-wide templates are employed to map these CILOs to the programme ILOs in a standardised manner, as shown in the curricular map. However, the Panel notes that in the curriculum skills map of the BSMM Major required courses, almost every PILO is mapped against several of the courses (for example Quality Management, Project Management/Service Marketing, Colour Theory & Practice, Supply chain management). While the course ILOs and Programme ILOs are appropriate for the courses constituting a management and marketing programme, it is unrealistic to expect that a course would be able to give explicit attention to all the PILOs represented in the curriculum skills map. The Panel also notes that the guidelines for undergraduate internship programme does not give details of the ILOs and how they are linked with the programme aims and outcomes or with the assessment. The Panel recommends that the College revise the contribution of these courses in the curriculum mapping to ensure a more selective mapping of the CILOs to the PILOs.

2.6   According to the SER and the Guidelines of internship there is a mandatory internship course for all students, which they typically undertake at the beginning of their fourth year of study, having completed 90 credit hours. According to the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Internship Programme' A minimum University C.G.P.A of 2.00 is required. This internship experience is in a management or marketing capacity. The Course Description section of the AU Catalogue for the academic years 2012-2014 indicates that the internship is 'taken as a substitute to two courses (3 credit hours each) from the programme core elective courses'. According to the Guidelines for the Undergraduate Internship Programme 'The internship programme requires a minimum of 180 hours of work at the internship worksite' and 'The numbers of credits that are earned by the students as a result of successful completion of the internship programme are six credits'. The Panel is of the view that the allocated credit hours for the internship is on the high side considering the expected amount of work from students. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the College revise the number of credit hours allocated for the internship course.

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During the tour of the facilities, the Panel was introduced to the Professional Relations Manager whose full-time responsibility is related to liaising with industry to create internship and job opportunities for the students of the University. Students are required to submit bi-weekly reports and a final report for the internship. These reports seem to be of manageable length and capture both the activities that the students are engaged in, as well as their key experiences and learnings. However, INTR400 is not reflected in the Programme Specification, instead, the two elective courses that could replace the internship course are mentioned in the plan. Nonetheless, it is not clear how the internship course would contribute equally to the PILOs in the same way as the two-elective courses. Furthermore, the list of BSMM Graduated Students who completed the internship shows 49 BSMM Graduated Students who completed the internship, but 134 students graduated over this period, suggesting that the majority of the students did not undertake the internship. The SER also notes that students who are already gainfully employed in a management or marketing capacity are exempted from the internship programme, but the conditions for exemption are not set out in the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship. 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   There is a formal Teaching & Learning Plan that was made available to the Panel. The plan contains the philosophy that underpins the university's teaching and learning methodology and the strategies used in its implementation. The SER lists 'a variety of nonconventional methods' of teaching and learning such as 'independent problem solving methods, group discussions and debates, practical sessions, literature search using the internet and a variety of library resources including electronic databases (digital library)'. Course files and interviews with both faculty and students provided evidence of the use of a wide range of teaching and learning methods. The Course syllabus specification document that is made available to students lists the teaching methods to be employed per week, linking these to particular topics and ILOs. While a variety of methods are utilised, these are not necessarily nonconventional, but do include participatory approaches. Innovative approaches that were described during interviews with faculty included the development of business ideas in the MAGT 424 course, the use of business simulations in MAGT 331and the use of actual job descriptions that students bring to class. Furthermore, given the relatively small size of classes, as well as the use of teamwork, participation by students is encouraged. Work-based assignments or projects, as well as the internship programme expose students to professional practice. Besides getting students out of the classroom, students are also exposed to professional practice. A list of 38 guest lectures from industry suggests that there is an active guest-lecturing programme. According to the SER, several courses have independent study projects, which would encourage personal responsibility for

learning. Interviewed students confirmed their satisfaction with the different teaching and learning methods used. The Panel appreciates that the formal teaching plan is implemented by the faculty members that help in achieving the learning outcomes of the courses and thus the programme.

2.8   An Assessment Policy exists that sets out guidelines for assessment. Additional guidelines on assessment are also found in the Guidelines for the undergraduate project, the Student Assessment Manual and the Policy for Multi-section courses. During the interviews, it was noted that the students are also aware of the appeal procedures in case they would like to challenge their grades. Nonetheless, the Panel noted that the Student Guidebook does not include a section detailing all aspects of assessment. The Assessment Policy encourages formative assessment. While course files do not always explicitly set out the use of formative assessment, during interview sessions, faculty members identified numerous ways in which this is practiced, such as setting practice examinations, class problem solving exercises, case discussions and presentations. During interviews with students, the Panel was able to confirm that they had been exposed to a variety of these types of assessment tasks. According to the SER, university regulations require prompt feedback, except for the final examination. This is supported the Assessment Policy which has a guiding principle that 'The University believes that assessment should provide students with feedback on learning'. Interviews with students indicated that they receive prompt feedback from faculty, typically within a week of the assessment due date. However, scrutinising samples of course files and from student interviews, it was noted that detailed feedback is not always provided in writing to students. The Assessment Policy calls for transparency in assessment. Samples of course syllabus/specifications that were included as evidence and that were viewed during the site visit set out the course structure, including the ILOs and corresponding Assessment Method and the weighting of each component in making up the final mark. Furthermore, according to the SER, instructors are required to provide model answers/marking rubrics for final examinations. Course files provided evidence of these. The Panel appreciates the arrangements for assessing students' achievement of learning and the level of transparency, fairness, consistency in assessment. However, the Panel recommends that assessment practices should be further improved through providing more written feedback on student assessment tasks such as assignments, using standard marking rubrics, rather than relying on verbal feedback. Furthermore, the Panel suggests that the assessment policy should also be included in the Student Guidebook.

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

- There is a coherent academic planning framework that has been put in place for the programme that ensures the alignment of the programme aims and objectives to the vision and mission of the University and the College.
- The BSMM curriculum is appropriately organised in terms of progression, workload, and balance between theory and practice.
- The practical skills component of the programme has been enhanced through comparisons to professional bodies.
- The syllabus generally meets the requirements for a programme in the management and marketing fields in terms of its breadth, depth, relevance and currency.
- There is a formal teaching plan that is implemented by the faculty members that help in achieving the learning outcomes of the courses and thus the programme.
- There are arrangements in place to ensure transparency, fairness, and consistency of assessment.

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

- revise the contribution of the courses in the curriculum mapping to ensure a more selective mapping of the course intended learning outcomes to the programme intended learning outcomes.
- revise the number of credit hours allocated for the internship course
- 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.
- provide more written feedback on student assessment tasks such as assignments, using standard marking rubrics, rather than relying on verbal feedback to students.

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   Ahlia University has an overall university admission policy, which stipulates a provision of acquiring a secondary school certificate (or equivalent recognized secondary certificates) for admission at the undergraduate degrees. 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 would be exempted from the English language test. The Panel is concerned that no exact cut-off marks were 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 English language placement test. Applicants holding secondary education certificates older than five years are considered mature students and are required to pass, in addition to the English language test, a Mathematics examinations. Transfer students are accepted in the programme if they have successfully completed at least one semester in another recognised institution where a maximum of 66% of the courses can be exempted if at least a 'C' grade was obtained. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that AU revise the admission policies to clearly state its requirements for the high school score and placement tests and make these available to all its stakeholders.

3.2   The Panel notes that there is a reasonable diversity in the profile of the cohorts of admitted students (e.g. gender, nationality). Their high school scores ranged between 55, and 97 with a good number of them being above 70 and only a few below 60, which matches the programme aims. According to AU Catalogue, an orientation programme of one-semester, consisting of one English and one Mathematic course, is offered to undergraduate students who intend to pursue their education in their respective colleges at AU but applicants are exempted if they graduated from a high school where English is the language of teaching. After studying the admitted students' profiles, the Panel noted that students from Arts, Science, Commercial and Technical secondary school tracks are being admitted to the programme. Although the Panel is satisfied that the profile of admitted students matches the aims of the BSMM programme, during the interview sessions, faculty members could not clarify to the Panel what additional support is provided to bring students from different secondary school backgrounds to the same level when entering the programme. The Panel recommends that necessary tangible measures to be taken to ensure that all students entering the BSMM programme are adequately prepared.

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3.3   The provided organizational chart suggests that there are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the BSMM programme in the College of Business and Finance, with the Chairperson reporting to the Dean of the College, while there are eight other staff included in the Department who report to the Chairperson. This arrangement is in accordance with the By-Laws. Related university-level committees and structures that complemented the CAQA's work at the time of the site visit included a University Council (UC), University Quality Assurance Committee (UQAC), Teaching and Learning and Accreditation Committee, Curriculum Review Committee (CRC), and the Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME). Parallel committees also exist at the college and departmental levels, such as College and Departmental Councils, College and Departmental Quality Assurance Committees. Being a small college, this, may cause overlaps and duplication of the committee functions. The Panel suggests that AU review and assess the effectiveness of the current committee structure, given the small size of the institution. Moreover, it was noted that amongst the nine staff members who were assigned to the Management and Marketing Department, at most, 35% of their time was dedicated to this programme, and more typically 25%, as per the tables given in the SER. Furthermore, these tables also suggest that some staff from the College of Business and Finance who are assigned outside the Department seem to dedicate the majority of their time to the BSMM, and some even contribute 100%. This raises some concern about the level of accountability that can be expected from the departmental staff for delivery of the programme, and so the Panel recommends that the College review the teaching allocation for the BSMM programme, particularly looking at the contribution of Departmental members versus the lecturing load of other members of the College.

3.4   Amongst the teaching staff contributing to the BSMM in 2013-2014, there are three Professors, six Associate Professors, ten Assistant Professors and five lecturers and one Graduate Assistant. With a total of 277 students enrolled in 2013-2014, this translates into a ratio of full-time staff to students of 1: 12, which seems to be acceptable, but is difficult to judge, given that staff are not fully dedicated to the programme, but spend the majority of their time elsewhere. According to the SER, the institution calculates the average for the staff to student ration to be 1:6, averaged over the past four years. During the site visit, the Panel scrutinised the CVs of all the faculty members teaching on the programme and confirmed that there is an appropriate range of specializations for all the major fields of the BSMM programme and the topics of research papers conducted by academic staff are relevant to the discipline. The Panel appreciates the appropriateness of the qualifications, areas of specialisation and the availability of a sufficient number of the faculty who teach on the BSMM programme.

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3.5   There are well documented policies related to recruitment, appraisal and promotion for staff, and mechanisms for their consistent implementation. As per the SER recruitment is typically initiated at the department level, where the Department Chairperson in coordination with the Department Council forwards the College Councils recommendations of human resources needs, after which the names of the selected candidates are forwarded to the Appointment and Promotion Committee for review and vetting. The Panel notes that the retention rates are satisfactory and was 100% in both 2012-2013 and 2013-2014. The AU promotion process is documented in the By-Laws of the Academic Promotions which mentions that 'A faculty member who has spent five years in his/her academic rank is eligible to apply for promotion to higher rank according to the rules and criteria specified in these bylaws'. According to the SER faculty appraisal is conducted annually based on Process of Overall Annual Faculty Evaluation document. The appraisal process incorporates self-evaluation by the faculty, student and chairperson evaluation as well as the evaluation of the faculty member's contribution to research, teaching and other contributions to the University and the community. Interviewed staff members expressed their satisfaction with these arrangements and confirmed that they are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. All newly-appointed staff undergo an induction process, during which both full-time and part-time academic staff learn about the assessment policy and other academic policies before commencing teaching. Staff interviewed expressed the view that the induction process has been very effective and is generally well organised. The Panel appreciates that there are adequate mechanisms to ensure consistent and transparent implementation of the wide range of staff-related policies, which are complemented by a well-functioning induction process for newly appointed staff.

3.6   The University has a student information system, called ADREG, which consists of subsystems for managing applications, admissions, withdrawals and transfers, timetabling, assessments, graduations, alumni affairs, and general student activities including complaints. The Panel confirmed during interviews with staff members that ADREG is used effectively in generating reports to inform decision making in relation to programme management, student progression and also for facilitating the early identification and support of 'at-risk students'. During interviews, students also confirmed that they are given training on how to use the ADREG system to manage their registrations online and access their assessment results and feedback from staff. The Panel appreciates the robustness of the ADREG system, and how it is effectively used by both staff and students to enhance students learning experience and as a functioning management information system to inform decision-making.

3.7   AU has an explicit policy for ensuring the security of learners' records and accuracy of results. According to this policy, electronic records, transcripts, course attendance and other personal information, are stored solely in ADREG in which all records are

password-protected and are backed-up on two levels. The Panel learnt during the site visit and from interview sessions that the first level records are backed up on a daily, weekly, monthly and annual basis with respect to different services; and on the second level, records are backed up remotely off-campus. Accuracy of results (grade entry) is ensured by multi-level verification through the instructor, the Chairperson, and the Dean of the College, and also the Dean of Student Affairs in the case of grade changes. In addition, there is a Quality Assurance officer specifically charged with verification of accuracy of students records, who carries out audits of results to assure data integrity. Security of the records is ensured by anti-virus, firewalls, and secure connections. Moreover, the Panel noted that there is a disaster recovery plan. It is common practice at AU that all, physical records, examinations scripts and student files, are kept for a period of two years in a secured place in the College's custody. The Panel established during the site visit that the security arrangements are functioning effectively. The Panel appreciates that there are adequate procedures in place to ensure the security of learner records and that these are implemented consistently.

3.8   Following a tour to the university campus during the site visit, the Panel visited a number of lecture halls and computer laboratories, the university library, and other facilities. During the tour to the library, the Panel reviewed the range of resources available including books, e-books, journals, databases and e-resources which students have access to on and off campus. The Panel found a reasonable collection of hardcopy and electronic titles and electronic databases in the library. The Panel encourages the College to continue increasing the library holdings in relation to the BSMM programme. Nonetheless, the Panel notes that limited private study spaces are available in the library for the students and encourages the University to consider increasing it. The Panel also noted 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 and to ensure that the library is not crowded especially at the beginning of the academic semester. Computer laboratories are monitored during class time. The College has made provision for 'free hours' in some computer laboratories where students can have access to the laboratories to perform research and work on their assignments. During interviews with staff and students and the tour of facilities, the Panel confirmed that the University provides adequate internet services including free Wi-Fi access on campus, email services, trouble-shooting support, software installation that is appropriate for the BSMM programme requirements and access to the University services to students and faculty. During interviews with the 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. The Panel is satisfied that sufficient resources are available to all students.

3.9   Ahlia University uses the ARDEG system to track the usage of resources in computer laboratories as well as the classroom usage. E-resources (including usage of electronic databases and 'Moodle') are also tracked through the database logs in the library that 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 also be generated easily upon demand and are used for decision making, as was noted from the provided documents. The Panel is satisfied with the tracking system being adequate for determining the usages of laboratories and e-resources and allowing for the evaluation of the utilization of these resources.

3.10   During the site visit, the Panel noted that there are support measures in place for the students, which are provided in the laboratories and library guidance and support, and for the use of e-resources. All courses in the College are available on 'Moodle' and support e-learning. There is also a Career Office that provides guidance to students on how to secure internships and permanent jobs. Every student is assigned an academic advisor, who provides continuous and necessary support to the 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 Student Counselling Support Unit is located in an exposed area which might not maintain student privacy. In the results of the student satisfaction survey, as well as in interviews, student expressed satisfaction with the support and academic advising services that are made available to them. The Panel appreciates the range and quality of support services that are made available to students. However, the Panel recommends that AU relocate the Student Counselling Support Unit to another more appropriate location to maintain the privacy of the 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 BSMM programme specifications. In interviews, students expressed satisfaction with the efficacy of the orientation programme in providing valuable information about AU's policies and regulations. The Panel was informed 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 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 Grade Point Averages (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 number of credits that have 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 Chairperson of the Department for action. During interviews with students, it was noted that at-risk students are called by their academic advisor and the University Counsellor to agree on an action plan. 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 BSMM students who are at risk of academic failure.

3.13   AU has a learning environment that facilitates opportunities for students to develop through informal learning such as the extra-curricular activities: the AU Magazine, Psychology Club, charity fund raisers, participation in Student Government where representatives of the student council participate in the College Council. It is also possible for students to attend a semester of one year- abroad as an exchange student with Institute Supérieur de Gestion (ISG) Paris France or through the Brunel 2+2 exchange programme. This provides students with an opportunity to understand different cultures and to improve foreign language skills). The learning environment is enhanced through visits to work sites, visits to foreign countries including GCC countries, and 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 student experiences and knowledge through informal learning.

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

- There are sufficient and suitably qualified academic staff with appropriate qualifications and specialisations to match the programme aims and curricular content.
- There are adequate mechanisms to ensure consistent and transparent implementation of a wide range of staff-related policies including promotions, which are complemented by a well-functioning induction process for newly appointed staff.
- There is a robust student registration system (ADREG) that is used effectively by both staff and students to enhance students learning experience and to inform decision-making.
- There are clearly stated policies and procedures to ensure the security of the learners' information and that these are implemented consistently.

- There is a well-functioning support system provided by the library, IT Unit, Career Office and Student Counselling Support Unit supported by qualified staff.
- There are effective systems and mechanism in place to provide academic support for at-risk students.

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

- revise the admission policies to clearly state its requirements for the high school score and admission tests, and make them these available to all its stakeholders
- take measures to ensure that students entering the programme without a Commerce background are adequately prepared for the BSMM programme
- review the teaching allocation for the BSMM programme, particularly looking at the contribution of Departmental members versus the lecturing load of other members of the College.
- move the bookshop out of the library to allow more space for students in the library
- relocate the student counselling support unit to another more appropriate location to maintain the privacy of the students.

3.16   **Judgement**

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

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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's Graduate Attributes are specified in the AU's Teaching and Learning Plan. The BSMM graduate attributes are included in the aims, objectives and ILOs of the programme and include attributes such as professional competence, uncompromising ethics, scholarship, critical thinking, teamwork, and so forth. These attributes have been incorporated into the statement of the various PILOs and are translated to the course level through the curriculum skills map. It is evident from course files, that the attributes, including the soft skills (e.g. ethics, leadership and self-reflection) are incorporated into the design of the courses, including their ILOs, planned teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks. The Panel acknowledges the way in which faculty could offer numerous examples during interviews to illustrate how they design and deliver their courses to address attributes such as leadership, communication, delegation and self-reflection. The Panel also appreciates how the graduate attributes have been cascaded down through the PILOs to the course level and have informed the course syllabus, assessment, and teaching and learning activities, yet the Panel encourages the College to explicitly link the stated graduate attributes to the programme ILOs.

4.2 The University has a benchmarking policy. Benchmarks and internal and external reference points are used to determine and verify the equivalence of academic standards with other similar institutions locally, regionally and internationally, mainly relying on desktop benchmarking initiatives of publically available information from selected universities and professional bodies. The Benchmark Study of the BSMM programme provides evidence that informal benchmarking of the BSMM programme has been done. These comparisons have been done *via* internet searches and rely on publically available information. The international agreement with Brunel University encompasses the BSMM programme, and according to faculty, Brunel has also provided access to detailed course outlines through their intranet. The Chartered Institute of Marketing – a professional association for Marketing - has also been used as a benchmark. During interviews, faculty also reported that the British Institute of Management and PMBOK are currently being examined as external reference points for reviewing the content of the courses in the management stream of the programme. The Panel notes that to date the benchmarking activities conducted were informal and generally utilised information available *via* publically available sources, which limits the benefit of these activities. The Panel recommends that the institution undertake a formal benchmark of the BSMM programme against other external institutions at the local, regional and international levels.

4.3   AU has a clearly stated Assessment Manual that it is regularly reviewed and updated by the Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), which is done in coordination with the College, by the use of a standard template. This was confirmed during interview sessions. One of the responsibilities of the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee is to regularly review assessment policies and there is evidence that this has been done. The Panel found from the course files that assessment tasks in particular courses are designed with the course ILOs in mind, and would typically include assignments, projects, a written mid-term examination, and a final examination. The Panel observed that this information is set out for students in the course specification. During interviews, the Panel was informed that an internal, three member committee, which includes the course lecturer, is responsible for monitoring assessment practices, particularly with respect to examinations. Furthermore, interviewees reported that all final examinations are subject to the scrutiny of an external examiner. The Panel appreciates that assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and reviewed. However, while the SER states that the Student Guide, website and University catalogue makes the assessment policy and procedure known to students, the sample Student Guide provided does not contain such information. The Panel suggests that this information to be included in the next version of the Student Guide.

4.4   University Guidelines are provided to ensure a standardised approach to the development of an ILO Assessment Matrix. In course syllabus specification documents that were available on site, the Panel observed that methods of assessment are set out in line with their relevant ILOs, topic title, and teaching method. The weighting of the contribution of the different assessment tasks to the overall course result is also set out in this document. Furthermore, formative assessment tasks are clearly noted in the document. During interviews, faculty members explained that new staff members are instructed in aspects of ILO for the courses they would teach. The Panel is satisfied with the mechanisms for the alignment of assessment with outcomes.

4.5   An Assessment Manual sets out the internal moderation procedures. Verification and moderation activities are in place, utilising a standard template to document their discussions. Samples of course files and interviews with faculty indicated that actual practises of moderation and grading are in place and consistent with the required moderation procedures. A verifier is assigned to each course to undertake quality assurance of the assessment task, utilising a standard template. The allocation of verification responsibilities is undertaken by a college committee, and typically an individual in a cognate discipline is appointed to this position, which was verified during interviews with academic staff. Documentations and interviews with academic staff confirmed the view of the Panel that appropriate internal mechanisms are largely in place to assure moderation of assessment instruments and of student

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performance in the assessments, which is acknowledged by the Panel. However, from the evidence provided it is evident that the verification process is applied only to examinations. Consequently, a large part of the validation of assessments is left to the validation process that is managed between the instructor and the verifier and signed off by the Chairperson for the Programme, rather than being included in the ambit of the moderation committee. The Panel recommends that the College extend the verification mechanisms that are currently in place for ensuring the alignment of examinations with learning outcomes, to other assessment tasks, such as class tests, quizzes, and assignments.

4.6   According to the SER, an annual external moderation is conducted for the degree. An external examiner is nominated and appointed following the university guidelines, who is then supplied with a copy of the Assessment Manual. Evidence of the implementation of the external moderation was provided to the Panel. Furthermore, recommendations of the external assessor/examiner are taken into consideration the next time the course is repeated. This was confirmed through interview sessions with faculty and the external assessor. The SER and the external assessor cite evidence of changes being made to courses as a result of the examining process [e.g. the case of MAKT310]. The Panel noted that only one external assessor had been appointed for the programme. While the disciplinary background of the external assessor was in risk management and business administration, the external assessor was expected to assess all courses, including those such as the marketing depth courses and other courses included in the third and fourth year [e.g. MAGT 324, MAGT 323, MAGT 331, MAGT 412, MAGT 423] that are not within the assessor's area of specialisation. The Panel recommends that the College appoint additional examiners to cover the full range of courses constituting the programme.

4.7   The Panel scrutinized the provided samples of students' work, which included course work and projects, and found that in general, students work is of an acceptable level. For each course, a variety of, and several assessments tasks were noted. Other common and appropriate forms of assessment noted were class contribution/oral participation, tests, case study assignments and presentations. Occasionally, assessments incorporated business simulations, plans and competitions (e.g. best business idea). From the scrutiny of the samples of student work provided, the quality of responses to written assessments was satisfactory. Some of the assignments made available were quite extensive for this course level, and of a good quality. Based on this examination of student work samples in course files, the Panel is of the view that the level of achievement is appropriate to the level and type the programme in Bahrain, regionally and internationally.

4.8   As reported in paragraph 4.4, there are mechanisms for the alignment of assessment with outcomes and from the paragraphs 3.3 to 3.6, there are satisfactory examination,

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assessment and moderation processes in place to ensure that credible and accurate results are provided that have been subjected to independent scrutiny. The distribution of the final results, as reflected in GPAs are positively skewed, but within acceptable limits. The list of undergraduate projects with grades awarded for BSMM graduates also represented a satisfactory level and distribution of grades. According to the SER, over 45% of students graduated with a course GPA of at least 3.0. Results for the past three years reflect a good distribution of grades, with the majority of students completing within five years. As well as the assessment outcomes reflecting the appropriate achievement of students' ability, graduate achievements are also appreciated in employer and alumni surveys. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the graduate's achievements as demonstrated in the final results meet the programme aims and ILOs.

4.9   The mean length of study of BSMM graduates since the 2010-2011 academic year is 4.03 years with a standard deviation of 0.95 years. This is good for a four year programme. Retention rates of students since 2002-2003 have ranged from a low of 59.3% in 2007-2008 to rates typically above 60% and over 90% for the past three years. Using the 323 enrolments until 2010-2011 as a basis for comparison (i.e. excluding 2011-2012 to 2014-2015 cohorts who are in the main, still studying), there have been 148 students who have graduated, or 46%. This represents a low throughput rate, which is accounted for in high rates of dismissals, suspensions and withdrawals. While these figures have improved over the last three years in particular, the high number of withdrawals is still of concern and the Panel recommends that the reasons for these withdrawals should be further investigated. The graduate destination list suggests that the majority of graduates have proceeded to suitable employment. In interviews with employers, the Panel learnt that graduates from the BSMM programme are sought after and displayed greater levels of confidence and social skills, while alumni reported in interviews that they are satisfied that the education that they had received has prepared them for the workplace. On the other hand, there is a large portion of students who do not successfully complete their studies. The Panel recommends that the College conduct further investigation into the reasons for the low throughput rates, looking at admission criteria in particular. Furthermore, the Panel recommends that the College introduce a student retention strategy based on a system of tracking student progress from admission to graduation, and in particular, analysing the reasons for the withdrawal of students.

4.10   There are detailed guidelines available for the Undergraduate Internship Programme. Mentors are assigned to students to monitor and review their participation in the programme. These guidelines also set out the requirements for academic and on-site supervision and include the assessment rubrics that are used. According to the Guidelines for Undergraduate Internship Programme document,

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students spend 180 hours of work at the internship worksite. Students are required to submit bi-weekly reports and a final report for the internship. These reports, along with the academic and on-site supervisor reports, form the basis for the mark that is awarded. The Panel concludes that work-based learning and its assessment are well managed. However, many students do not participate in the internship. The criteria for participation in the internship programme have not been clarified, nor is it clear what grounds are considered for the granting of an exemption. The data provided in the list of graduated students who completed the internship indicates that 49 BSMM students completed the internship, out of the 134 students who graduated over this period. This suggests that the majority of the students did not opt for the internship and instead register for the two courses (3 credit hours each) from the programme core elective courses. This raises concerns about the equivalence of the learning experiences of students who take these two different options, as well as the equivalence of the assessment tasks and standards. This is discussed further under Indicator 1. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel notes that, for those who opt for the internship, the programme is well managed and provides a valuable work-based learning experience.

4.11   There are policies, procedures and structures in place to monitor the supervision of the undergraduate projects. The policy covers, the processes for the undergraduate project, roles and responsibilities of the various parties, examination, storage and deadlines. Flowcharts provide a clear overview of processes of the undergraduate project that the student can follow. It also includes the various report forms that are used. A full-time member of the Department, with at least a minimum rank of Lecturer, three years teaching experience at university level, and evidence of recent or current research activity, is usually appointed as the Internal Examiner, whose responsibility it is to reach an independent judgement on the quality of the written report as well as the oral examination. An Examination Committee is convened to finalise the assessment and inform the student of the result, and typically consists of the supervisor and two other internal examiners. 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). Independent monitoring of the project supervision process is undertaken by CAQA. Furthermore, in interviews with faculty and students the Panel learnt that the ADREG system assists in managing the supervision process by requiring written reports to be submitted and sending reminders if this is not done in time. The Panel appreciates that the processes related to the supervision of projects are well managed and are appropriate for the BSMM programme.

4.12   The College External Advisory Board has been established since 2013 and consists of a cross-section of business leaders from the private and public sectors. Although it has four members, the committee members are well qualified for their role. They

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have years of experience in a range of industries and businesses, and all hold post graduate qualifications, and senior positions. Terms of Reference, the minutes of meetings and interviews with members of the Board suggest that it is active and that the College takes their role seriously. In the meeting with the members of the Advisory Board, the Panel confirmed that the Board plays an important role in linking the College with industry and providing valuable feedback for the College to improve its programmes. Regular meetings have taken place in the last year in particular. The BSMM programme has been considered by the Board and various recommendations were made and acted upon. The Panel appreciates the enthusiasm and active participation of the Advisory Board and the constructive way in which the College engages with it.

4.13   Surveys are used to ascertain the satisfaction levels of the graduates and their employers. The Panel was informed in interviews that two surveys are undertaken annually, one with graduates and one with employers. Employer and graduate survey responses are provided to the Centre for Measurement and Evaluation and are administered and analysed on a programme basis. The sample sizes with both surveys are relatively small, but results indicate relatively high satisfaction scores. In interviews, employers expressed satisfaction with the quality of graduates produced, and graduates expressed satisfaction with the standard of education that they had received. The Panel appreciates that both graduates and employers are satisfied with the 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 specifications.

- The assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and revised by the BSMM programme team.

- The processes related to the supervision of graduation projects are well managed.

- There is a College External Advisory Board that is governed by terms of reference, and whose feedback is reflected into the newly adopted curriculum plan.

- The employers and the alumni are satisfied with the programme and its delivery.

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

- formalise the relationship with the institutions that are benchmarked with and expand the benchmarking activities to cover local, regional and international universities
- establish a more robust internal moderation system to cover all forms of assessment
- ensure that adequate external examiners are engaged to collectively cover the full range of courses constituting the programme
- introduce a student retention strategy based on a system of tracking student progress from admission to graduation, and in particular on analysing the reasons for the withdrawal of students.

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   The AU Policies and Procedures Manual contains a wide array of institutional policies and procedures ranging from HR, accounting, purchasing, ICT and safety, to general administration. The Centre for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA) has the overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of policies and procedures across the University. 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, review and closure of academic programmes, as well as regulations pertaining to academic study. From the submitted documents and interviews with academic, administration and Quality Assurance staff the Panel is satisfied that the institution's policies are applied effectively with the involvement of the staff. The Panel appreciates that the quality management system and arrangements at AU ensure consistent application of the policies and procedures across the College.

5.2   From the SER and interviews with senior faculty, the Panel learnt that the BSMM programme is managed on a day-to-day basis by the Management and Marketing Department Chairperson, who assumes responsibility for coordination of the programme and its quality and represents the programme in the CAQA. The BSMM 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 SER and supporting documentation provides evidence of active management of the quality of the programme. The Panel also interviewed academic and administrative staff, including representatives from CAQA, who provided evidence of the effective leadership of the programme. The Panel acknowledges the measures in place to achieve effective and responsible leadership of BSMM programme.

5.3   AU has developed a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual 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 programmes and is

supported by an array of university-level committees and structures that complement the CAQA's work. The Panel found that both the College Council and Department Council 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 academic 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 BSMM 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, Reviewing and Closing Academic Programmes document. 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 (HEC) for licensing. The Panel was informed 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 departments in collaboration with CAQA and the TLAC. The process involves 'validation' of the programme specifications and course syllabi in terms of learning outcomes, teaching and assessment methods, textbooks, the analysis of students' attainment levels of course ILOs, and making use of the Internal Verification of Course Syllabus/Specification template. From interviews, the Panel learnt that 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 student evaluation has led to many improvements in specific courses in the BSMM programme. The Panel found

evidence in the minutes of a meeting of the University TLAC, that a TLC sub-committee had conducted an internal review of the Bachelor in Management and Marketing based on some of the evaluation findings. The Panel notes that the end-of-semester student evaluations compliment the course and programme validation system to generate 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 programmes provides for the incorporation of 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 into consideration in programme reviews. The Panel confirmed that the review process uses various input and feedback from both course tutors and external reference points such as external evaluators, alumni and employers, and the College External Advisory Board (CEAB). The Panel found evidence that the programme was last reviewed in 2013-2014 following and earlier review 2009-2010 and found instances where programme review recommendations have been implemented to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The Panel appreciates the frequency and diligence with which the BSMM programme is periodically reviewed.

5.8   The Centre for Measurement and Evaluation (CME) periodically conducts surveys of AU students and alumni, and employers of alumni. The student satisfaction surveys tackle the quality of course offering and evaluation of the instructors. Feedback collected from the students surveys flows to the University Council, College Council and Department Council meetings for discussion. The alumni surveys collect information on the quality of the BSMM programme and their learning experience. The CAQA implements a 'Quality Periodic Programme Review and Utilization of Feedback' procedure in order to ensure that feedback is utilised in improving the programme. 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, which were highlighted previously. The Panel is pleased 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 members. The Panel confirmed that the Center has designed a

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formal staff development plan that seeks to identify the training and development needs of staff, and respond with the design and delivery of appropriate professional development workshops to address any gaps. The Panel noted that the training programmes are also geared towards attainment of individual staff needs, and hence staff are able to attend courses 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 are presented. The Panel found evidence that many academic and administrative staff members 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 ILOs, teaching and learning and assessment methodologies, among others. Furthermore, AU has an Annual Professional Development Plan (2013-2014), which helps staff to attend external workshops and participate in conferences as mentioned earlier. Interviewed staff showed full awareness and clear understanding of these policies and procedures and indicated that they benefited from all workshops organised by the University. The Panel appreciates the effective arrangements that have been put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and non-academic staff.

5.10   The Panel found evidence that surveys have been conducted with alumni and some employers with an aim to gather intelligence about the labour market and ensure the currency of programmes offered by the College of Business and Finance. Other sources that have been relied upon to scope the labour market include the expertise within the College External Advisory Board. The Panel, however, did not find any systematic approach that is used to target and collect data from specific segments of the labour market that are directly related to the BSMM programme offered by the College. The Panel is concerned that the current methodology has the potential of overlooking relevant organizations and market segments in which no alumni are employed. The Panel recommends that the College routinely and systematically scope the labour market by targeting and collecting market intelligence from appropriate segments of the labour market.

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

- There are suitable institutional policies and procedures that are consistently applied across the College and to the BSMM programme.
- There is a quality management system, which is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- Both academic and non-academic staff are committed to ensuring the quality of delivery of the BSMM programme.
- There are adequate arrangements in place for the internal annual evaluation of the programme.

- The programme is frequently, diligently and periodically reviewed.
- There are effective arrangements put in place to identify and meet the individual and professional development needs of both academic and non-academic staff.

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

- develop and implement a formal mechanism that routinely and systematically scopes the labour market needs to enhance the 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 Management and Marketing programme of the College of Business and Finance offered by Ahlia University.

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