

# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report**

**Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance –  
Bangor University  
Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Site Visit Date: 6-8 November 2023**

**HA096-C3-R096**

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## Acronyms

ACCA	Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
BIBF	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BScAF	Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance
BU	Bangor University
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
ESC	Educational Standards Committee
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of Degree-Awarding Bodies
HEC	Higher Education Council
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QER	Quality Enhancement Review
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

## I. Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews, where the whole institution is assessed; and the Academic Programme Reviews (APRs), where the quality of teaching, learning and academic standards are assessed in academic programmes within various colleges according to specific standards and indicators as reflected in its Framework.

Following the revision of the APR Framework at the end of Cycle 1 in accordance with the BQA procedure, the revised APR Framework (Cycle 2) was endorsed as per the Council of Ministers' Resolution No.17 of 2019. Thereof, in the academic year (2019-2020), the DHR commenced its second cycle of programme reviews.

The Cycle 2 APR Review Framework is based on four main Standards and 21 Indicators, which forms the basis of the APR Reports of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

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

*Standard 1: The Learning Programme*

*Standard 2: Efficiency of the Programme*

*Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates*

*Standard 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance*

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') decides whether each indicator, within a standard, is 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed'. From these judgements on the indicators, the Panel additionally determines whether each of the four standards is 'Satisfied' or 'Not Satisfied', thus leading to the programme's overall judgement, as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Criteria for Judgements**

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

The APR Review Report begins with providing the profile of the programme under review, followed by a brief outline of the judgement received for each indicator, standard, and the overall judgement.

The main section of the report is an analysis of the status of the programme, at the time of its actual review, in relation to the review standards, indicators and their underlying expectations.

The report ends with a Conclusion and a list of Appreciations and Recommendations.

## II. The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance – Bangor University
College/ Department*	Academic Centre
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance
Qualification Approval Number	Higher Education Council Decision No. (405) on 23 June 2014
NQF Level	-
Validity Period on NQF	-
Number of Units*	23
NQF Credit	-
Programme Aims*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop comprehensive understanding of the conceptual and applied aspects of the study of accounting and finance, and its relation to other relevant subject areas including management and economics.</li> <li>2. Develop an appreciation of the legal, ethical and social contexts within which accounting and finance are applied.</li> <li>3. Develop ability to provide and analyse information for a variety of decision making, accountability, managerial, regulatory and resource allocation purposes.</li> <li>4. Develop a range of transferable and intellectual skills that will allow graduates to undertake a career in accountancy, finance or wider business and successfully study for a professional accountancy or other qualification.</li> </ol>
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	<p>Graduates will be able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critical evaluation of the design, operation, and validation of accounting systems and their impact on individuals, organizations, markets, the wider economy, and the environment, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex accounting problems.</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Advanced theories and principles of financial systems, structures, and instruments, including risk measurement and management, pricing of financial assets, and value-maximizing behavior by households and firms, and the ability to apply these theories to real-world financial problems.</li> <li>3. Advanced techniques for generating and interpreting accounting and financial information, and the ability to critically evaluate the usefulness of this information for decision-making purposes.</li> </ol> <p>Graduates will be able to demonstrate subject-specific knowledge and skills in the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Advanced analysis of the value of accounting in different sectors, taking into consideration the impact on individuals, organizations, and the environment, and the ability to develop and implement innovative accounting solutions.</li> <li>5. Advanced application of technical language and practices of accounting to real-world scenarios, including financial statement disclosure, managerial accounting, auditing, and taxation, and the ability to critically evaluate the appropriateness of these practices.</li> <li>6. Advanced techniques for recording, summarizing, and analyzing transactions and other economic events, including the preparation and interpretation of financial statements, conducting financial analysis and projections, and understanding the limitations of financial reporting procedures, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex accounting problems.</li> <li>7. Advanced evaluation of the financial sector's institutional framework, including financial markets, institutions, and instruments, financing arrangements, governance structures of businesses, and investment opportunities for private and institutional investors, and the ability to critically evaluate the effectiveness of these frameworks.</li> <li>8. Advanced use of theoretical tools and theories of finance, including financial mathematics, capital budgeting, informational efficiency, optimal risk sharing, portfolio theory, asset pricing and valuation, derivative pricing, risk management, term structure of interest rates, and behavioral finance to analyze financial decisions and strategies, and the ability to generate innovative financial solutions to complex problems.</li> </ol>
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	<p>9. Advanced interpretation of accounts and other financial data using appropriate statistical tools, including asset pricing models, financial models, projections, event studies, and elements of statistical and time series analysis, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex financial problems.</p> <p>Graduates will develop the following cognitive and intellectual skills:</p> <p>10. Critical evaluation of complex arguments and evidence, and the ability to identify and evaluate assumptions and biases in arguments, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>11. Advanced analysis, filtering, and evaluation of verbal and numerical data to draw reasoned conclusions and make decisions, including the ability to identify patterns, trends, and relationships in data, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>12. The ability to identify and solve complex problems with limited guidance using appropriate methods and techniques, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>Graduates will develop the following generic and transferable skills:</p> <p>13. The ability to engage in independent and self-managed learning at an advanced level, including the ability to identify learning needs, plan and implement learning activities, and evaluate learning outcomes, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>14. Advanced numeracy skills, including the ability to process and analyze complex financial and other numerical data, and an understanding of advanced statistical concepts, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>15. Advanced proficiency in using contemporary information and communications technology to acquire, analyze, and communicate information effectively, including the ability to use sophisticated software to analyze financial data, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>16. The ability to communicate advanced quantitative and qualitative information appropriately to different audiences, both orally and in writing, including the ability to present complex financial information clearly and persuasively, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p>
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	<p>17. The ability to work collaboratively and effectively with others in small group projects, including the ability to contribute to group discussions, actively listen to others, and provide constructive feedback, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>18. The ability to conduct research, locate, extract, and analyze information from multiple sources, while acknowledging and referencing sources, and the ability to critically evaluate the quality and relevance of sources, and the ability to generate innovative solutions to complex problems.</p>
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\* Mandatory fields

### III. Judgement Summary

#### The Programme's Judgement: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
<b>Standard 1</b>	<b>The Learning Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
<b>Standard 2</b>	<b>Efficiency of the Programme</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Partially Addressed
<b>Standard 3</b>	<b>Academic Standards of Students and Graduates</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Partially Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Not Applicable

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Not Applicable
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Addressed
<b>Standard 4</b>	<b>Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance</b>	<b>Satisfied</b>
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Addressed

## IV. Standards and Indicators

### Standard 1

#### The Learning Programme

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

#### Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

*There is a clear academic planning framework for the programme, reflected in clear aims which relate to the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the college.*

##### Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance (BScAF) programme of Bangor University (BU) is offered by Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF) and follows a clear planning process that ensures its relevance and fitness for purpose. The programme is guided by BU and BIBF Teaching and Learning Strategy and has a clear requirement for validation/revalidation and monitoring and approval. The programme complies with the Validation Manual, Validation Agreement, and Partnership Management Plan, which describe responsibilities, academic regulations and requirements for designing, developing, and offering academic programmes. Furthermore, the BScAF programme falls under the regulation of the United Kingdom (UK) Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and aligns with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ).
- BIBF has no risk management policy. The Self-Evaluation Report (SER) describes the mechanism in place to deal with risk relating to the BScAF programme. Risks are identified and documented in a risk register within the BU Board Assurance Framework document and a BIBF Academic Centre Risk Register. Risk items are discussed in the meeting minutes of the BU-BIBF Management Board and the External Board of Examiners. However, the Panel notes from the risk register that action owners and review of standing items are not, respectively, routinely identified and tracked. Furthermore, the Panel confirmed from the interviews with senior management that the tracking of risks is at the institutional level. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF should consider developing a risk management policy for effective mitigation of academic risks at the programme level and to ensure that the action points on the register are assigned to an appropriate action owner for effective implementation and monitoring of risks.

- The BScAF programme is mapped to the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement and aligns with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) at level 6. The Panel learned during the site visit interviews that the BScAF programme is currently submitted for alignment to Level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of Bahrain. The Panel confirmed from the interviews the mapping processes for the programme and is of the view that they are appropriate.
- The qualification title of the BScAF programme is concise and reflects the content of the programme. The Panel notes from the submitted evidence which includes the Student Programme Handbook and the samples of certificates and transcripts that the title is accurately documented on the official documents and the BIBF and BU websites.
- The BScAF programme has clear and appropriate four aims that are stated in the Programme Specification. According to the SER and interviews with senior management and faculty members, the programme aims are regularly reviewed as part of the validation process. These aims are also consistent with the mission, vision and strategic goals of BIBF.
- The BScAF programme is governed by a clear Validation Agreement which is subject to renewal every five years and sets out the responsibilities of both BIBF and BU, programme's mode of delivery and the awarding of the degree. The Panel notes from the Validation Agreement and learned during the interviews that BU academic rules and policies are applied as the University retains full academic control over the award. The roles and responsibilities of BU and BIBF relating to programme administration, delivery, progression, students' admission and quality assurance are also clearly stated in the Validation Agreement.
- The BU-BIBF Partnership Management Board is responsible for managing the delivery of the programme and monitoring student recruitment/transfer processes, financial performance, and risk management. After reviewing the Practice for Collaborative Provision in the BU Code 12-2021, the Panel is of the view that the Validation Manual, Validation Agreement, and Partnership Management Plan ensure the quality of BScAF programme offered in Bahrain. The Panel is also of the view that the Validation Agreement is well monitored by BU-BIBF Partnership Management Board to ensure effectiveness in meeting obligations of both parties.
- The website of both BU and BIBF provide clear, detailed and updated information about the BScAF programme. Additional information about the programme is also found in the Academic Centre Brochures and the Student Programme Handbook. The Panel is of the view that the published information on the BScAF programme is clear and sufficient to provide relevant information to all stakeholders.

## Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

*Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and these are appropriate for the level of the degree and meet the NQF requirements.*

### **Judgement: Addressed**

- As noted in the SER and the Programme Specification, graduate attributes are embedded in the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). The SER also indicates that the alignment of the PILOs to the programme aims is explored during the validation and revalidation processes. The Panel is of the view that PILOs are clearly mapped to the BScAF programme's aims as evidenced in the Programme Aims document. The mapping between PILOs and programme's modules/courses and with the teaching and learning methods are also appropriate and clearly articulated in the Programme Specification.
- The Programme Specification includes 18 PILOs which are categorised into four categories related to knowledge and understanding, subject-specific knowledge and skills, cognitive and intellectual skills and generic and transferable skills. The Panel notes that PILOs are generally appropriately written and are aligned with the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements. Moreover, the PILOs are reviewed and revised to ensure that they are written at FHEQ level 6 during the programme revalidation process as evident in the Revalidation Report. However, the Panel finds that the PILOs are generally quite lengthy. Furthermore, assessing the achievement of a composite PILO is challenging as it is not possible to directly link a Course Intended Learning Outcome (CILO) to a specific component of the PILOs. Therefore, the Panel suggests that BIBF in coordination with BU make the PILO concise and ensure that they are kept to a manageable number.
- The CILOs of the BScAF courses are included in the Module Specifications. During validation and revalidation processes, CILOs are benchmarked against FHEQ. The Panel reviewed the Revalidation Report and the CILOs Review & Update documents and found that all CILOs were reviewed and updated to ensure the use of proper verbs that suit the level of courses, number of CILOs and their appropriateness to the PILOs. Based on the submitted evidence, the Panel affirms that the CILOs are appropriately mapped to the PILOs as evidenced in the Module Files.

## Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

*The curriculum is organised to provide academic progression of learning complexity guided by the NQF levels and credits, and it illustrates a balance between knowledge and skills, as well as theory and practice, and meets the norms and standards of the particular academic discipline.*

### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The study plan of the BScAF programme shows that programme features a well-structured set of courses organised to facilitate a steady progression year-on-year. Students are required to successfully complete relevant first year courses to progress to the second year, and likewise, third year courses must be successfully completed before progressing to the third year. Consequently, there are no separately defined prerequisites, and this was satisfactorily discussed during the interviews. A total of 360 credit hours is required to complete the programme and this is consistent with international norms.
- The revalidation of the programme, conducted on a five-year cycle, involves a systematic review and update of the programme, as evidenced by the information presented in Programme Revalidation Report Form and the Revalidation Report. Similarly, the BScAF programme is aligned with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) programme. Together with the adherence to the UK QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, this alignment ensures ongoing relevance and currency of the programme. The Panel acknowledges, based on the information presented in the BIBF Detailed Notes for Revalidation, that several amendments were suggested as part of the recent revalidation exercise. The implementation of the amendments is evident in the updated Programme Specification and Module Specification documents. The Panel verified the programme revisions during interviews with senior management and faculty members.
- The benchmarking of the BScAF programme to the UK QAA and the ACCA as well as the mapping of assessments to CILOs ensure an appropriate balance between theory and practice, as well as between knowledge and skills in the curriculum. The Panel reviewed the Module Specification documents and noted a balanced mix of theoretical and applied courses designed to develop and assess a diverse set of skills across different levels. Furthermore, the Panel notes from the interviews that the programme receives valuable practical input from external stakeholders. Thus, the Panel appreciates the variety of learning and assessment methods used in the delivery of the programme that help students better understand the real-world applications of accounting and finance.
- The Panel notes from the updated Programme Specification and Module Specification documents that the courses offered in the programme align consistently with those provided by similar programmes in other institutions, both locally and internationally. For instance, the content introduces student to relevant skills in the first year (e.g., the 'Introductory Financial Accounting' (ACC1101) and the 'Introductory Management Accounting' (ACC1104) courses) and progressively builds on these skills throughout the last two years of the programme (e.g., the 'Advanced Corporate Finance' (ABB3105) and the 'Advanced Accounting Theory and Practice' (ABB3106) courses). Therefore, the Panel concludes that the contents of the courses have appropriate depth and breadth.

- The textbooks utilised in the programme are generally appropriate and comparable to those used in similar programmes at other institutions. However, the Panel notes that several textbooks mentioned in the Module Specification documents are not the most recent editions, and in some cases, only one reference textbook is specified. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should enhance the mechanisms for ensuring the currency and variety of textbooks and references used in the programme.
- According to the SER, both BIBF and BU respect the ‘cultural and linguistic sensitivities’ of the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Panel noted that in line with the Validation Agreement, BIBF’s academic staff are responsible for the conception, planning and teaching of the programme and assessment design. This arrangement allows for the inclusion of regional, national, and local content and priorities as well as the extensive use of case studies from Bahrain. This practice facilitates the incorporation of regional, national, and local content appropriately. The Panel verified through interviews with faculty members that local context is embedded in the programme through in-class activities and case studies.

### **Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning**

*The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes.*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- BIBF’s Teaching and Learning Policy aims to ensure that the programmes’ courses deliver valuable learning experiences that meet students’ needs and expectations. This aim is consistent with the two pillars of BU Teaching and Learning Strategy, which are related to transformative learning experiences and excellent student experiences. The Strategy and Policy in place emphasise compliance with the requirements of the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Bahrain, BQA, and UK QAA. Moreover, BU Validation & Revalidation Reports include a section on learning and teaching that refers to the development of teaching methods such as flipped classroom, lesson planning and real-life applications, which are reflected in the Programme Specification and Module Specification documents.
- E-learning is part of the BIBF’s Teaching and Learning Policy and Code of Practice. According to the SER and submitted evidence, BIBF has a fully-fledged online learning platform (MyClass portal 3.0) which was used effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to an e-library. The Panel also reviewed the E-Learning Student Satisfaction Forms and noted during the interviews the high level of students’ satisfaction of the efficiency of the online and e-learning activities on BIBF’s platforms.
- The BIBF Teaching and Learning Policy and BU Teaching and Learning Strategy encourage student-centered active learning, which is facilitated by the use of ‘Lesson

Plans' by faculty members. Furthermore, significant practical contents are embedded in the programme, as outlined in the Module Specification documents, to facilitate students' profession/practical exposure. The Panel learned from the interviews that there is effective integration of electronic platforms (Dealing Room) in their learning as appropriate and engagement in professional development activities such as financial trading competition.

- Although there is no specific research course in the BScAF programme, the teaching and learning methods and the related assessments have research capabilities embedded in them as per the Module Specifications and the sample of assessments. Students are expected to engage with relevant literature to support their research findings and to analyse data as per the submitted evidence (e.g., the 'Corporate Finance' (FIN2101) and the 'Financial Markets and Institutions' (ACC1103) courses).
- The BIBF Teaching and Learning Policy and BU Teaching and Learning Strategy encourage all types of learning and students' capabilities for life-long learning. The Module Files provide evidence of students' work and the way that BScAF students have the opportunity to learn through formal classes and extra-curricular activities, which help students in developing independent and lifelong learning skills. Furthermore, the online resources available for BScAF students such as Pearson 'MyEconLab' and 'MyManagementLab' allow them to exercise self-assessment and manage their own learning.

### **Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements**

*Suitable assessment arrangements, which include policies and procedures for assessing students' achievements, are in place and are known to all relevant stakeholders.*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The BScAF programme is governed by the BU Assessment Framework which applies to all programmes leading to a BU award. There are also a set of policies, including the Learning Assessment Policy within the BIBF's Quality Code of Practice 2020. The policies cover all aspects of assessments, including the use of appropriate tools, grading, internal and external moderation, mark assurance and award of certificates, amongst others. The Panel noted during the interviews that internal and external stakeholders are aware of these policies, which are publicly available online and explained in the Student Handbook and induction documents. The provided samples of the Module Specification documents and assessment files confirm the implementation of BU Assessment Framework.
- Both formative and summative assessment tools are used by the programme in a variety of ways. Formative assessments, such as in-class activities and case studies, provide ongoing feedback to facilitate students learning, whilst summative assessments measure

students' achieved learning. BIBF also has marking criteria published in both Examination Guidelines and the Student Programme Handbook. As per the BU Assessment Framework, feedback on summative assessments must be provided within four working days and, as much as possible, prior to the submission date of any related subsequent assessments. However, the Panel learned from the interviews with faculty members and students that feedback on summative assessments is not always timely and could take up to a month. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should ensure that feedback on assessments is consistently provided to students in a timely manner in line with BU Assessment Framework.

- The Learning Assessment Policy within the Quality Code of Practice 2020 makes provision for internal and external verification and moderation of assessment tools and grading of students' assessed work to ensure rigour and fairness. Samples of completed internal moderation and external moderation forms were provided to the Panel as evidence. Based on the evidence and interviews with faculty members and external examiners, the Panel is of the view that the mechanisms in place are appropriate for ensuring fair and effective grading of students' achievements.
- There are provisions for dealing with academic misconduct and appeals, which are explained in the Student Handbook. The details are documented in the Malpractice, Appeals and Complaints Policy stated in the Quality Code of Practice 2020. As per the Policy, misconduct cases are dealt with by an independent committee. Samples of malpractice cases and investigation outcomes were presented to the Panel as evidence of the implementation of the Policy. Students appeal cases are discussed in the Complaints, Malpractice and Appeals Review Group meetings and the outcomes of students' appeals are officially communicated to students as shown in the samples of grade appeal cases. The Panel is of the view that the provisions for dealing with academic misconduct and appeals are appropriate.

## Standard 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 2.1: Admitted Students

*There are clear admission requirements, which are appropriate for the level and type of the programme, ensuring equal opportunities for both genders, and the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources.*

#### Judgement: Addressed

- The Admission and Registration Policy of BIBF consists of criteria and procedures that are clearly set for both new and transferred students based on the admission regulations of HEC and BU. The Policy is implemented through a dedicated Admission Committee overseeing the application process. Moreover, as an outcome of the recent revalidation of the programme, the admission requirements have been clearly stated in the updated Programme Specification. The Panel affirms, based on the statistics presented in the BIBF – Bangor University Student Demographic Information 2019-2022, that there is a fair balance between female and male students admitted to the programme. The Panel is of the view that the Admission and Registration Policy is appropriate and consistently implemented.
- As per the Admissions Guidelines for Academics and Terms of Reference of the Admissions Committee document, the admission requirements for the BScAF programme include an International Foundation Programme Certificate, 3 GCSE A levels (with grades BCC to BBC), or an International Baccalaureate Diploma with a minimum score of 24. All international students whose first language is not English must also demonstrate proficiency in English language (based on IELTS or an equivalent test). Whilst there is no specific mathematics requirement as recognised by BIBF in its recent Benchmarking Report, the Panel notes from interviews with senior management the use of student achievement/progression data to evaluate admission requirements. Upon examining the profile of students' achievements in the Bangor University - Progression & Completion 2017-2022 documents, the Panel observes satisfactory progress among admitted students. Notwithstanding this, the Panel suggests including mathematics requirements in the admission criteria of the BScAF programme.

- BIBF provides foundation courses for students who are inadequately prepared, as per the Admission and Registration Policy and the Admissions Guidelines for Academics and Terms of Reference of the Admissions Committee document. Applicants who do not satisfy the English Language requirements must successfully complete the following remedial courses: 'Business English' (BEN100), 'Academic Study Skills' (ACS100), and 'Academic Writing & Presentation Skills' (AWP100). The Panel is of the view that the mechanisms in place to support inadequately prepared students are appropriate.
- BIBF's regulations and procedures for credit transfer and recognition of prior learning are clearly stated in the Admission and Registration Policy. The detailed procedures, including the level and currency of the prior learning and the award of credit are documented in the Quality Assurance Accreditation of Prior Learning Guidelines. The Panel is satisfied with the existing arrangements.
- The Admission and Registration Policy is regularly reviewed in accordance with the Quality Code of Practice, the FHEQ and Qualifications and Credit Framework. The Panel noted from the meeting minutes of the Academic Steering Committee, dated October 2022 that the admission procedures and criteria are discussed, and there are action plans in place to enhance the admission procedures and criteria. However, the Panel notes that student progression data is not disaggregated per programme, making it unclear how student performance contributes to a comprehensive evaluation of the admission criteria. Thus, the Panel recommends that the BIBF should ensure that student retention, progression and completion data is disaggregated per programme to enable an appropriate review of the admission criteria.

## **Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff**

*There are clear procedures for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and professional development of academic staff, which ensure that staff members are fit-for-purpose and that help in staff retention.*

### **Judgement: Partially Addressed**

- BIBF has a Human Resources (HR) Policy which covers all the aspects related to the recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion of academic staff. The detailed processes are covered in the HR Procedures document and are consistently implemented. Job description files for various positions, Faculty Onboarding Sample Document, Faculty Induction documents, End of Probation Period Forms and Promotion Procedures were presented to the Panel as evidence. Based on the evidence and insights gained from the interviews with academic and administrative staff, the Panel is of the view that the existing Policy and Procedures are appropriate.

- BIBF does not have a research policy that ensure the quality of scientific research carried out by BIBF faculty members, and its alignment with the research plan of the Institution. During interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that faculty research responsibility is integrated into the objectives of faculty members, constituting 5% of their activities. However, the Panel observes that the published research over the last three academic years comprises only nine papers, predominantly in open-access journals. Consequently, the Panel recommends that BIBF should develop and implement a research policy that ensure the quality of scientific research carried out by BIBF faculty members, and its alignment with the research plan of the Institution.
- BIBF's HR Policy and Procedures documents offer a general outline of the academic staff workload, stating that a full-time academic staff member typically has a minimum teaching workload of 600 hours per year, with adjustments for administrative responsibilities. The HR Policy also addresses special needs of women, including maternity and compassionate leaves. Nevertheless, upon reviewing the academic staff Work Allocation Data document and Faculty Workload Sheet, the Panel noted a lack of a comprehensive workload analysis, as only data on academic staff subject expertise and timetables were provided. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should adopt a clear academic staff workload model in line with BIBF's HR Policy to ensure a balance between their teaching responsibilities, research, academic advising and administrative responsibilities.
- BIBF currently employs eight full-time and 11 part-time academic staff, as indicated in the Higher Education Institutional Accreditation Scheme file. The full-time academic staff comprises four individuals with PhDs, three with master's degrees, and one with a bachelor's degree. The part-time academic staff also holds a mix of first degrees, master's degrees, and/or professional qualifications. The Panel observes that the academic staff exhibit an appropriate range of academic qualifications, specialisations, and professional experience.
- The professional development needs of academic staff are identified on a yearly basis through the annual performance appraisal reviews, following the guidelines outlined in the HR Procedures document. The Panel reviewed documentation related to the implementation of diverse professional development trainings, including the Training & Development Plans 2022, Employee Professional Development 2023 Plans and Post Training Feedback Form, and found them to be consistent. Furthermore, through interviews with academic staff, the Panel learned that the existing arrangements are effective.
- BIBF has developed procedures and measures (including competitive remuneration packages and effective grievance procedures) within the HR Policy to attract and retain academic staff. The Panel observed, based on the Staff Retention Report 2018-2022 and the

2020-2022 Statistics sheet, that the retention rates in the BIBF have ranged between 90% - 95% over the last five academic years. However, these data lack analysis and disaggregation at the programme level, and there is no evidence of corresponding discussions. Thus, the Panel recommends that BIBF should develop and implement appropriate measures to analyse and monitor academic staff turnover at the programme level.

### **Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources**

*Physical and material resources are adequate in number, space, style and equipment; these include classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories and other study spaces; Information Technology facilities, library and learning resources.*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The BIBF building is equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure, including electronic platforms to provide students with recent applied and practical learning opportunities according to the BIBF's New Headquarters Facilities, Bahrain Bay document and the Campus Tour. The building facility provides 41 appropriately sized classrooms, a 300-seat auditorium, 20 smart classrooms, five computer laboratories, a trading simulation room, group study spaces, a clinic, and a library, catering to the needs of the current student population. In addition, during interviews, faculty members and students confirmed that the facilities of the programme are adequate. The Panel appreciates BIBF's State-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities that are equipped with electronic platforms to provide students with recent applied and practical learning opportunities.
- The BIBF campus is fully Wi-fi enabled. Students in the BScAF programme have access to a Moodle-based learning management system called MyClass, where they can access their courses and related material, including e-textbooks, additional readings, other media, schedules, assignments and recorded sessions. The Panel learned during the interviews with students and staff that the system provides adequate support for virtual and hybrid learning. The Panel is of the view that the Information Technology (IT) facilities are appropriate for the needs of the BScAF programme.
- Students in the BScAF programme have access to a diverse range of printed and online resources through both physical and online libraries, including textbooks, databases, e-books, and e-journals. The eLibrary is integrated with MyClass, offering automated updates. However, during interviews, and from the submitted evidence, the Panel noted that BIBF does not fully benefit from the utilisation reports and there is no evidence of discussions and follow-up actions. Therefore, the Panel suggests that BIBF improve the mechanism used to monitor the utilisation of library resources and to ensure the adequacy of resources in BScAF programme.

- The maintenance of the laboratories falls under the IT and Operation Departments. The two departments maintain a log of all issues and maintain records of audits conducted by the local authorities. BIBF IT team operates a Helpdesk System for both academic staff and students. During the interviews, the Panel was informed that, to be aligned with Bahraini regulations, regular security audits are carried out by the BIBF team.
- The BIBF's Health, Safety Security Policy and Procedures describe the responsibilities of the parties involved and include appropriate arrangements to ensure the health and safety of students and staff on campus, in addition to general health and safety information. BIBF has also a dedicated team for emergency response to ensure the safety of students, academic staff, administrative staff, and visitors on campus.

## **Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems**

*There are functioning management information and tracking systems that support the decision-making processes and evaluate the utilisation of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, along with policies and procedures that ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results.*

### **Judgement: Addressed**

- BIBF utilises the institution-wide Student Information System (SIS) to facilitate tracking and management of various educational processes for administrators, students, faculty, and other stakeholders. The SIS covers student records, enrollment, attendance and grades, official documents, integration with MyClass 3.0, management reporting, and classroom management, amongst others. The system also facilitates decision-making at different levels, including management, class and faculty evaluation. In addition, Blackboard and MyBangor Application are used for managing virtual teaching and learning. While the SIS is effectively utilised for tasks like issuing progression documents and generating library reports, the Panel observed during interviews that students in the BScAF programme underutilise the system for academic matters. The Panel suggests that BIBF encourage students to fully use the management information system in place for effective tracking of academic-related issues.
- The Panel notes that the systems at BIBF generate tracking reports on a regular basis to inform decision-making at various levels. For example, utilisation reports, such as those for e-library books and laboratories, are used to monitor usage and assess adequacy. Furthermore, assessment reports generated by the (BANNER) student records software platform contribute to decision-making regarding examination quality and compare student performance between BU and BIBF for the Annual Monitoring Report.
- BIBF has Information Security Policy and Procedures addressing diverse security concerns related to the IT system. The management of students' records follows a thorough digital

workflow, incorporating multiple authorisation and verification steps. Approved records transition from BIBF's Registration to the BU's secure record management system. During the interviews, the Panel gained insights into BU's records management and retention practices. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the systems in place at BIBF for managing and securing records are appropriate.

- During interviews and as per the SER, the Panel noted that BIBF follows a proper approval route for awarding certificates and transcripts to learners. Furthermore, the Panel learned during interviews that students' progression documents are issued and signed by the BIBF Registrar. The final transcript and certificate, which confirm the students' graduation, are only issued by Bangor University's Registration Office where a copy of the certificate is maintained for records. The Panel confirms as per the Quality Code of Practice 2020 and the provided Samples of Certificates that the transcripts bear the name of the award as validated.

## **Indicator 2.5: Student Support**

*There is appropriate student support available in terms of guidance, and care for students including students with special needs, newly admitted and transferred students, and students at risk of academic failure.*

### **Judgement: Partially Addressed**

- A range of student support services is made available to BIBF students enrolled in BScAF programme in terms of student guidance, care and support, which are provided through the Academic Centre, and a comprehensive induction. Students also receive a copy of the Student Programme Handbook which introduces them to the programme content, rules, regulations, and code of conduct and a University Kick Off Session. The IT and the Operations Departments offer first aid services through its Health Unit. In addition, a strong system of academic and pastoral support is in place for students in the programme, as per the Quality Code of Practice 2020.
- Necessary arrangements are in place for inducting newly admitted students, including those transferring from other institutions. The Panel learned during interviews that new students receive an induction at the beginning of each semester. The induction is conducted over a period of two days consisting of various sessions which cover presentations from the Academic Centre, Quality Assurance (QA) Department, and a demonstration on library resources, illustrating how to access and utilise them. Moreover, students are provided with career guidance services and support. The recently developed Pastoral Support Policy clearly states that support is provided to students at three levels: academic, personal and career counselling. Furthermore, BIBF provides students with opportunities to undertake extracurricular learning to help them enhance their work-

readiness and plan their career paths. The Panel discussed the career guidance services and support during interviews with administrative staff and found them appropriate.

- As described in the BIBF recently developed Pastoral Support Policy, all new students are assigned academic advisors by the Academic Centre at BIBF. The general academic advising is provided by the Head of the Academic Centre while subject tutors and Module Leaders provide subject-specific advice. However, the Panel did not receive any evidence regarding the implementation of the Pastoral Support Policy, including records of meetings between advisors and advisees. Thus, the Panel recommends that BIBF should expedite the approval and implementation of the Pastoral Support Policy.
- BIBF implements a Special Needs Guideline which aims at supporting students with physical or educational challenges and ensuring equal access to education for all academically qualified individuals. Adjustments encompass offering necessary special accommodations and arrangements to guarantee equal access to facilities, teaching and learning services, and/or examinations. Moreover, the Panel noted during the campus tour that BIBF caters for the needs of female students.
- During interviews, the Panel noted that the BIBF's learning management system did not facilitate the easy and quick identification of individual students' overall academic performance, nor did it clearly identify students with low academic achievements. The system only flags students with low attendance, requiring the programme administrative officers to manually monitor and identify students at risk of academic failure. During interviews, the Panel noted that the status of academically at-risk students as well as the measures taken to support them were missing. The Panel recommends that BIBF should introduce and implement a formal process and procedures to identify, monitor and support students at risk of academic failure.
- BIBF gathers feedback from students through surveys and suggestion boxes regarding preparedness for work and the quality of teaching and learning as well as the overall satisfaction with the programme. However, the Panel observed in interviews an inconsistency in the implementation of surveys, and there was a lack of evidence of regular assessments and improvements aligned with the needs of students on the BScAF programme. Thus, the Panel recommends that BIBF should develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure regular assessments and improvements of student support services to ensure effectiveness.

## Standard 3

### Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

#### Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

*The assessment is effective and aligned with learning outcomes, to ensure attainment of the graduate attributes and academic standards of the programme.*

#### Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- As per the SER, BU ensures that Bangor-awarded degrees have valid and reliable assessment methods that are in line with current good practice. The BScAF programme is governed by the BU Assessment Framework and the Learning Assessment Policy within the BIBF's Quality Code of Practice 2020. Moreover, the Programme Specification and Module Specification documents identify various types of assessments with corresponding weights and mappings to the learning outcomes. The Panel reviewed sample assessment tools submitted as evidence, which show a clear and appropriate balance between theoretical and practical assessments. The Panel is of the view that the complexity and level of assessments meet the academic standard of the programme.
- As per the BIBF's Quality Code of Practice and the Institutional Effectiveness Monitoring Policy, students' achievements at BIBF are evaluated and monitored at different levels, including the Academic Centre and Examination Board. The BIBF uses the newly introduced Graduate Exit Survey as an indirect mechanism to ensure that graduates' achievements are meeting the PILOs. There is no evidence of direct mechanisms in place to measure the attainment of CILOs and PILOs. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should develop and implement direct mechanisms to ensure that graduates' achievements are meeting the CILOs and the PILOs.
- BIBF has several mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of its Learning Assessment Policy and BU Assessment Framework, which applies to the BScAF programme. These mechanisms include regular internal audits and reviews of the programme. The Panel reviewed the submitted Annual Monitoring Reports which are overseen by BU. The Panel concludes that there are effective mechanisms in place for monitoring the implementation and improvement of the assessment processes.

### **Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity**

*Academic integrity is ensured through the consistent implementation of relevant policies and procedures that deter plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work).*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- BIBF has policies and procedures that address the importance of maintaining academic integrity, as outlined in the BU Validation Manual, the BIBF Malpractice, Appeal & Complaints Policy, and the Student Handbook, which are available on the BIBF website. Moreover, the assessment related guides documented in the Examination Policy and Procedures and the Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism provide further details and information. Penalties and consequences to be expected as a result of academic misconduct acts are clearly stated in the policies and procedures to facilitate dealing with such cases. Both faculty and students are provided with a QA induction and awareness sessions on the policies and procedures. The Panel is of the view that the policies and procedures relating to academic integrity are appropriate.
- The Panel noted from the SER and from interviews that the MyClass 3.0 portal has Turnitin built into it for detecting plagiarism and that the procedures are dully followed when a case of plagiarism is detected. Plagiarism cases are referred to the Complaints, Malpractice and Appeals Review Group for investigation and decision on applicable penalties. All academic misconduct cases are also reported to the QA Department and the Examination Board. Samples of academic misconduct cases were submitted to the Panel. The Panel is of the view that BIBF has appropriate measures in place to maintain academic integrity and that appropriate actions are taken to deal with cases of academic misconduct and plagiarism.

### **Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment**

*There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The Learning Assessment Policy includes formal procedures for the internal moderation of assessments, which consists of pre-assessment verification and post-assessment moderation as per the Assessment and Moderation Workflow 2023. The internal pre-assessment verification is conducted to confirm that the assessments are fit for the intended purposes and error-free. During interviews, the Panel learned that the assessments are created by the Module Leader and internally verified by the co-lecturer

or subject-matter expert within the Institution. The Panel also confirmed from the interviews and the SER that the internal moderation process at the Academic Centre includes 'double marking' of a sample of assessments which ensures fairness in the grading of the assessments. The Panel reviewed a sample of pre-assessment verification forms and post-moderation amendments and noticed several modifications in response to internal moderation. The Panel is of the view that the internal moderation process in place is appropriate.

- BIBF through its QA Department regularly monitors the internal moderation effectiveness in line with the Quality Code of Practice 2020, and the resulting outcomes are discussed in the meetings of the Educational Standards Committee (ESC), which ensures that the necessary actions are taken. Moreover, the Panel observes that internal moderation comments and corresponding action points are documented in the Annual Monitoring Reports. The Panel is of the view that the arrangements in place are appropriate for evaluating the BScAF programme's internal moderation.
- A team of External Examiners is appointed by BU following its Code of Practice for External Examiners: Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses document. The roles and criteria for the appointment of External Examiners are clearly described in the document. Their roles include the provision of feedback on assessment tasks, consistency of grading and internal moderation. Samples of external examiner reports were provided to the Panel as evidence. The Panel notes that these reports are discussed in the meetings of the External Examination Board, where extensive feedback from external examiners and corresponding actions points were mentioned. The Panel is of the view that external moderation contributes to the review and improvement of the BScAF programme.
- According to the SER, the internal audits conducted by the Academic Centre provide a mechanism for the evaluation of the effectiveness of internal and external moderation. The Panel examined the Internal Audit Details, dated October 2022 that noted that both internal and external moderation tasks are reviewed. Furthermore, external examiners' attendance at External Examination Board, their reports and subsequent discussions in the ESC meetings provide additional mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of the moderation of the BScAF programme.

### **Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning**

*Where assessed work-based learning takes place, there is a policy and procedures to manage the process and its assessment, to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level for meeting the intended learning outcomes.*

**Judgement: Not Applicable**

### **Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component**

*Where there is a capstone project or thesis/dissertation component, there are clear policies and procedures for supervision and evaluation which state the responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and students, and there is a mechanism to monitor the related implementations and improvements.*

**Judgement:** *Not Applicable*

### **Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates**

*The achievements of the graduates are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes as expressed in their assessed work, rates of progression and first destinations.*

**Judgement:** *Addressed*

- The Panel examined the Programme Specification, Module Specifications and Module Files, which include the syllabi, learning material, assessment and students graded work and was able to confirm the appropriateness of students' achievements as well as compatibility with other similar undergraduate programmes. This was also positively reflected during interviews with faculty, students, alumni and employers.
- The Panel scrutinised a cohort analysis of enrolment, retention and graduation rates data over the last five years (from 2017-2018 to 2021-2022) for the BScAF programme. Based on the Data Statistics Reports, the Panel estimates that about 90% (29 out of 32) and 94% (17 out of 18) of the BScAF students successfully graduated in 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years respectively. Based on the evidence presented, the Panel is of the view that the progression and graduation rates are appropriate.
- BIBF recently deployed Graduate Exit Surveys and Alumni Surveys to collect data from its graduates. Evidence provided to the Panel confirms that data collected from these surveys is discussed in the Annual Monitoring Reports, and suggestions and recommendations are made accordingly. The Graduate Report from 2018-2022, indicates an overall employability rate ranging from 85% - 92%. Student feedback is collected and analysed per course at the end of each semester. Additionally, the Panel received positive feedback from employers in the interviews about the programme graduates. Overall, the Panel was able to confirm from the interviews with the programme's stakeholders that there is a general satisfaction with the BScAF programme graduates' profile, knowledge, and skills.

## Standard 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.*

#### Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

*There is a clear quality assurance management system, in relation to the programme that ensures the institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently.*

##### **Judgement: Addressed**

- BIBF in collaboration with BU has a set of policies and regulations that govern the collaborative arrangements and the needs of the BScAF programme. These policies and regulations are primarily derived from the BU's Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision, and BIBF's Quality Assurance Code of Practice. For instance, there are various policies and procedures covering Admission and Registration, Teaching and Learning and Institutional Effectiveness Monitoring, which are regularly updated and disseminated. The Panel learned during the interviews that the policies and regulations and related updates are well disseminated to all stakeholders. Moreover, awareness of QA policies and practices amongst academics and support staff are created *via* regular QA workshops and trainings and staff inductions. The Panel learned during the interviews with academic and support staff that they have a good understanding of the QA and their roles in ensuring effectiveness.
- The QA system consists of various committees with a responsibility for ensuring that the programme runs smoothly. There are several committees such as the ESC and QA Working Group in charge of academic governance, the Operational Board in charge of the administrative aspects of the programme, as well as the External Examination Board and the Board of Studies which oversee student progression and award.
- The Institutional Effectiveness and Monitoring Policy of BIBF has a provision for annual monitoring reporting to ensure appropriate implementation of policies and procedures. The Annual Monitoring Reports submitted to the Panel have various action points along with their corresponding status stated on them. Moreover, these reports serve as a regular agenda item in the ESC meetings, as shown in the minutes of meetings, to ensure effective oversight.

- Periodic internal audit conducted by BIBF QA Department and academic oversight of the ESC provide mechanisms for ensuring effective monitoring, evaluation, and improvement of the QA system. Internal Audit Reports are generated, and these are discussed at the meetings of the Academic Studies Steering Group and meetings of the ESC. Based on the presented evidence and the interviews, the Panel is of the view that the mechanisms in place are appropriate.

## **Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership**

*The programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership and there are clear lines of accountability.*

### **Judgement: Addressed**

- As illustrated in the BIBF Overall Organisation Chart and the Academic Centre Chart, the Institution is led by a Board of Directors and various committees. The hierarchy includes an Academic Centre, headed by its leader who manages the programme. The Head of the Centre reports to the Chief Executive Officer, who, in turn, reports to the Chairman of the Board. There is also a well-defined organisational structure at the BU and BIBF level as outlined in the BU-BIBF Organisational Structure. The Panel observed from the interviews that there is a single Academic Centre Head overseeing all the programmes offered at the Centre and noted from the interviews that there is a need for more people to support the management of the different academic programmes offered under the Academic Centre. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BU-BIBF should ensure effective support for the Academic Centre at BIBF in the form of programme managers for effective management at the programme level.
- There are appropriate reporting lines as per the Academic Structure. There are committees and sub-committees charged with managing the operational aspects of the BIBF programmes. The terms of reference for the different management posts and the various committees are clearly stated in the Institutional Effectiveness Monitoring Policy, within the BIBF Quality Assurance Code of Practice. For instance, the ESC which oversees the academic and learning quality reports to the Head of the Academic Centre.
- The overall responsibility and custodianship of the programme rest with BU as the awarding Institution, as per the Validation Agreement. The Academic Centre is tasked with the responsibility of developing and delivering the programme in accordance with the regulations, policies, and procedures approved by BU, as outlined in the Validation Manual. Interviews with senior management confirmed that the existing arrangement and the management of the programme are shared responsibility and facilitated by various committees and sub-committees.

- The Panel confirms from the interviews and supporting evidence that the programme management appropriately demonstrate effective leadership. For instance, BU Validation Manual provides clarity on the respective roles of both BIBF and BU and the various governance structures such as the Board of Studies, Examination Board and QA functions to ensure effectiveness. Moreover, these arrangements are subject to regular and periodic reviews, as indicated in the Revalidation Report.
- As the awarding institution, BU has the responsibility for ensuring that the academic standards of the BScAF programme at BIBF are equivalent to those of the BScAF programme at BU as per the Validation Agreement. BU ensures this through the provision outlined in the Validation Manual, Regulations for Taught Programmes, and the Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision, amongst others. For example, the oversight of the Operational Board and Examination Board serves as a mechanism for ensuring that equivalence in quality of education is achieved.
- Students on the BScAF programme can transfer from BIBF to BU for their final year of study, as per the SER and the Reapproval of Validated Partnership with the BIBF document. The Panel confirmed the current arrangement during the interviews and is satisfied that the established mechanisms ensure an equivalent learning experience.

### **Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme**

*There are arrangements for annual internal evaluation and periodic reviews of the programme that incorporate both internal and external feedback and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.*

#### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The Panel examined the submitted evidence, including the Annual Monitoring Report and ESC meeting minutes, and noted that an internal annual review is implemented at BIBF in line with the BU Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision. End of Course Reports, internal and external moderation reports, Internal Audits Details as well as surveys are used in the collection of data which feed into an aggregated Annual Monitoring Report for annual reviews of the BScAF programme. Recorded outcomes and action plans are discussed in the meeting minutes of the ESC and reported to BU. Moreover, the ESC meetings ensure an effective follow-up and implementation of the annual evaluation recommendations and actions. Changes to the programme arising from these review and monitoring activities are documented as per the provided evidence which includes the Response to Institutional Reapproval Report – BIBF December 2022 and BIBF Action Plan – Post BU Revalidation documents.

- The BU Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision sets out the expectation that all BU approved programmes undergo a 5-year revalidation cycle, alternating between external and internal reviews, as confirmed in interviews with the QA staff of BU and BIBF. As noted in the SER, the revalidation of the BScAF programme occurred in November 2022. Revalidation events which act as periodic reviews at BIBF are led by a senior academic expert contracted to provide external advice, as per the Code of Practice for Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review. The Panel noted from the information in the Programme Revalidation documentation that the conducted revalidation was comprehensive covering learning outcomes, assessments, course delivery and contents, resources and student workload, among other aspects. Moreover, BIBF in collaboration with BU has a mechanism to ensure that periodic revalidations and related improvements are properly implemented. The Panel noted from the interviews and the submitted evidence, which includes the Update on Outcomes from the BIBF Institutional Reapproval & Revalidation, October 2023, that the revalidation recommendations are implemented and monitored. The Panel is of the view that the mechanisms in place are appropriate.

#### **Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys**

*Benchmarking studies and the structured comments collected from stakeholders' surveys are analysed and the outcomes are used to inform decisions on programmes and are made available to the stakeholders.*

##### **Judgement: Partially Addressed**

- The BScAF programme is benchmarked to the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), and is aligned with the requirements of the UK QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and QAA UK Quality Code and FHEQ. The Panel notes that the alignment of the BScAF programme with the QAA Subject Benchmark Statements informed the review and amendment of the PILOs and CILOs during the programme revalidations. Moreover, according to the SER, the benchmarking results are currently being analysed. Furthermore, from the interviews and the supporting evidence, the Panel noted that a desk-based benchmarking exercise is currently being undertaken by BIBF to compare the BScAF programme to similar programmes at the local and regional level. The BU Programme Benchmarking Report shows the outcomes of the benchmarking exercise and proposed recommendations.
- In interviews with the QA staff, the Panel was informed that BIBF carries out surveys to seek feedback from stakeholders. The surveys include Course Evaluations Destination Surveys and Alumni Surveys. However, the Panel noticed that some of the surveys including exit and alumni surveys were recently deployed. In addition, the feedback from employers is not particularly related to the BScAF programme, and it is not collected in a regular and systematic way. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should develop

and implement formal mechanisms to ensure that the feedback of all internal and external stakeholders is regularly collected and analysed at the programme level.

- The survey results are summarised in the Survey Summary document and discussed in the Annual Monitoring Reports along with developed action plans. The Panel learned from interviews with QA staff that all surveys are scrutinised by the Head of the Academic Centre and that the feedback is used to inform decisions on the programme. Additionally, the minutes of meetings of the Board of Studies of BU and BIBF dated 21 February 2022 confirm effective communication relating to surveys and feedback. Moreover, students' representatives sit on various committees including the Board of Studies to ensure effective communication of implementation of improvements. The Panel noted from interviews that stakeholders (including students, alumni, and employers) were satisfied that their comments were taken seriously and implemented.

#### **Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs**

*The programme has a functioning advisory board and there is continuous scoping of the labour market and the national and societal needs, where appropriate for the programme type, to ensure the relevancy and currency of the programme.*

##### **Judgement: Addressed**

- The BScAF programme benefits from BIBF interactions with professional bodies and alumni to ensure that its programmes meet the labour market, national, and societal needs. During the interviews, the Panel confirmed that there is a strong engagement with alumni to gain insights into the industry and to facilitate the exposure of students to emerging themes in the market. Additionally, the accreditation of the programme by the ACCA and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, in addition to the BScAF graduates' eligibility for 8-9 exemptions serve as clear evidence of the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms.
- BIBF has an advisory board with clear terms of reference, as per the Institutional Effectiveness Monitoring Policy. The submitted samples of meeting minutes and the advisory board profile show that the advisory board's membership includes practitioners with diverse industry backgrounds. The advisory board meets regularly to discuss issues affecting the BScAF programme. The provided samples of the meeting minutes show updates to the programme based on the advisory board's feedback. Additionally, the meeting minutes for July 2021 was a standing item on the 2020-2021 Annual Monitoring Report. Although the advisory board is constituted at the institute level, it is clear to the Panel that the feedback from the advisory board is used regularly and systematically in programme decision-making.

- The SER states that BU and BIBF use, respectively, external consultants and ad-hoc committee to scope the market for assessing the extent to which the BScAF programme meets the labour market, national, and societal needs. The Panel confirmed from the submitted evidence and interviews that a thorough exercise was carried out by BIBF in 2022 to explore the market and identify key emerging themes and areas to maintain the programme's relevance and alignment with international and local trends, as in the Market Analysis Report of 2022. As a result, an action plan was developed as part of the market analysis. The Panel notes that mechanisms in place are regularly monitored through the advisory board meetings, Annual Monitoring Reports and the deliberations of the ESC. Overall, the Panel is satisfied that the mechanisms in place for scoping the labour market and societal needs are appropriately monitored.

## V. Conclusion

**Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the virtual site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020*:**

**There is Confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Accounting and Finance of Bangor University offered by Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance.**

**In coming to its conclusion regarding the four Standards, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:**

1. The variety of learning and assessment methods used in the delivery of the programme that help students better understand the real-world applications of accounting and finance.
2. BIBF's State-of-the-art infrastructure and facilities that are equipped with electronic platforms to provide students with recent applied and practical learning opportunities.

**In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance should:**

1. Develop a risk management policy for effective mitigation of academic risks at the programme level and to ensure that the action points on the register are assigned to an appropriate action owner for effective implementation and monitoring of risks.
2. Enhance the mechanisms for ensuring the currency and variety of textbooks and references used in the programme.
3. Ensure that feedback on assessments is consistently provided to students in a timely manner in line with Bangor University Assessment Framework.
4. Ensure that student retention, progression and completion data is disaggregated per programme to enable an appropriate review of the admission criteria.
5. Develop and implement a research policy that ensure the quality of scientific research carried out by BIBF faculty members, and its alignment with the research plan of the Institution.
6. Adopt a clear academic staff workload model in line with BIBF's Human Resources Policy to ensure a balance between their teaching responsibilities, research, academic advising and administrative responsibilities.

7. Develop and implement appropriate measures to analyse and monitor academic staff turnover at the programme level.
8. Expedite the approval and implementation of the Pastoral Support Policy.
9. Introduce and implement a formal process and procedure to identify, monitor and support students at risk of academic failure.
10. Develop and implement a formal mechanism to ensure regular assessments and improvements of student support services to ensure effectiveness.
11. Develop and implement direct mechanisms to ensure that graduates' achievements are meeting the Course Intended Learning Outcomes and the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.
12. Ensure, in collaboration with Bangor University, effective support for the Academic Centre at BIBF in the form of programme managers for effective management at the programme level.
13. Develop and implement formal mechanisms to ensure that the feedback of all internal and external stakeholders is regularly collected and analysed at the programme level.