



هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
(Hosted Programme – DePaul University)
Master of Science in Finance
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 22-24 January 2024

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Acronyms

AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AIP	Academic Integrity Policy
AoL	Assurance of Learning
AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
APR	Academic Program Review
APRC	Academic Program Review Committee
BIBF	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DCBAC	Driehaus College of Business Advisory Council
DCIB	Driehaus Center for International Business
DCOB	Driehaus College of Business
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
DOTS	DePaul Online Teaching Series
DU	DePaul University
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
KGSB	Kellstadt Graduate School of Business
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Master of Science in Finance
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PD	Professional Development
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome

QA	Quality Assurance
QAR	Quality Assurance Review
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
ToR	Terms of Reference

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 Standard 1 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 (BIBF) – DePaul University
College/ Department*	Centre for Academic Studies
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Master of Science in Finance
Qualification Approval Number	-
NQF Level	-
Validity Period on NQF	-
Number of Units*	12
NQF Credit	-
Programme Aims*	The Master of Science in Finance program provides students with the real-world skills necessary to succeed as finance professionals. Students develop a deep understanding of modern financial markets along with the instruments and tools used in the industry. In addition to acquiring a conceptual foundation, students learn to develop strategic financial objectives, improve investment decisions, design financial instruments, manage corporate risk and seize new business opportunities.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acquire both knowledge and skills that are broad, deep, and necessary to fulfil their professional goals. 2. Use analytical and decision-making skills to solve problems encountered by business and investors. 3. Apply financial theory to solve a variety of problems in investment management, risk management, and in corporate finance. 4. Produce a coherent written statement of the analysis of a complex business issue. 5. Understand and solve problems encountered by a multinational business. 6. Develop the foundation to think about and address ethical issues in the context of financial markets and institutions.

* Mandatory fields

III. Judgement Summary

The Programme's Judgement: Confidence

Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	The Learning Programme	Satisfied
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Partially Addressed
Standard 2	Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfied
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Addressed
Standard 3	Academic Standards of Students and Graduates	Satisfied
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Not Applicable
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
Standard 4	Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfied
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: Addressed

- The Master of Science in Finance (MSF) at DePaul University (DU) is offered in partnership with the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF) as a part-time programme. The programme is co-managed by the Office of Kellstadt Graduate School of Business (KGSB) and Driehaus Center for International Business (DCIB) in the Driehaus College of Business (DCOB). Both KGSB and DCOB are accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and achieved a 5-year reaccreditation from the AACSB in 2021. The programme has been offered since 2001 and is guided by a clear planning process in line with the mission and vision statement of DU. The DCOB 2024 Strategic Plan confirms the MSF is appropriately aligned with international norms/practices for a graduate level programme.
- According to the SER, potential risks at the institutional level and academic risks are reviewed during the biweekly meetings of the co-leadership team, Directors of the KGSB and the DCIB, and the programme administrator at BIBF. The management of potential risk at the institutional level is carried out *via* the Office of Institutional Compliance. The Panel confirmed during interviews that potential risks to the programme are discussed regularly although no formal records are kept. Also, the Panel has not seen evidence of a mechanism in place to ensure that risks at the programme level are identified, monitored and effectively addressed. The Panel recommends that DU and BIBF should maintain a formal risk register to record risks related to the programme and ensure that these risks are identified, monitored, and effectively addressed.
- The MSF programme is aligned with the AACSB framework and processes are currently underway to align it to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) qualification design

requirements at level 9. During interviews, the Panel discussed the NQF application process and is satisfied that progress is being made.

- The programme title is Master of Science in Finance, as per the SER and the programme website. The title is concise and reflects the content of the programme. Furthermore, the title is consistently documented on the programme certificates and the BIBF and DU websites.
- The aims of the MSF programme are stated in the SER and captured also in the 'DePaul Brochure'. Although evidence presented to the Panel shows that the MSF programme has undergone a significant restructuring, there is no evidence of specific changes to the programme aims per se. This notwithstanding, the Panel learned from interviews that the programme aims are reviewed as part of the regular programme reviews.
- BIBF and DU have a mission to provide excellent career-linked and innovative practical learning as per the 'DePaul University Mission Statement' and 'BIBF Strategic Plan Action'. The MSF programme aims are consistent with this institutional mission and strategic goals. This consistency is partly assured through the alignment of the programme to the AACSB framework. The MSF programme is not considered as a research degree and as such has no research-related aims. The Panel concludes based on the evidence presented (including the mapping of programme-level competency goals to the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and the ILOs attainment matrix), that the programme aims contribute to the achievement of the institutional missions and strategic goals.
- There is a contractual agreement between BIBF and DU that specifies the responsibilities of each party regarding the running of the MSF programme. The agreement specifies the rules and conditions regarding, for example, the development and delivery of the curriculum of the MFS programme (which is the responsibility of DU) and the business development and logistics support (which is the responsibility of BIBF). The responsibilities and rules regarding staffing, academic standards, access to students' services (at both BIBF and DU) are also covered by the agreement. The agreement treats the programme as a cross-border. Besides, the existing partnership has lasted almost 25 years and has recently been renewed. The Panel is of the view that the agreement in place is appropriate and appreciates the long and well-established professional relationship between both DU and the BIBF which is underpinned by trust principles and a willingness to adapt programmes to meet local Bahrain and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) needs.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- The SER does not provide any information on specific generic graduate attributes. However, given that the MSF is accredited by the AACSB, it could be implied that generic graduate attributes are embedded into the programme as part of the DCOB/KGSB missions. The Panel requested extra evidence on graduate attributes and was provided with a spreadsheet ('Learning Goals, Outcomes, Data Alignment Attainment' document) stating core competencies and their mappings to groups of learning outcomes. The Panel gained more insights into the expected generic graduate attributes during interviews, but these are not documented.
- The MSF programme has six Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that are clearly stated in the 'Learning Goals, Outcomes, Data Alignment Attainment' document. There is no direct linkage between the PILOs and the programme aims, but this can be implied by the alignment of the MSF programme with the AACSB framework. Furthermore, the Panel observes a lack of a complete programme specification document along with the PILOs as is conventional with other institutions and a lack of PILOs statement on the programme webpage. Therefore, the Panel recommends that DU and BIBF should ensure that graduate attributes and the PILOs are clearly stated in all documentation and websites of DU and BIBF. The Panel also recommends that DU and BIBF should develop a comprehensive Programme Specification Document covering all essential information, including programme aims, learning outcomes and associated mappings is created and availed *via* the DU and BIBF websites.
- The PILOs are appropriately written, using suitable action verbs to ensure their measurability. As stated in the SER, there exists a Curriculum Committee responsible for consistently reviewing the PILOs and proposing revisions to ensure their proper alignment with AACSB requirements. The Panel is of the view that the recent restructuring of the programme ensures the appropriateness of the PILOs and their consistency with international norms.
- The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are appropriately mapped to the PILOs as demonstrated in the submitted evidence provided to the Panel. Furthermore, there is a mapping of individual modules with the PILOs. The CILOs are also benchmarked with the relevant AACSB requirements. However, the Panel noticed inconsistency in some of the CILOs included in the course syllabi. For example, in some course syllabi (e.g., FIN523, FIN553, FIN798) there are no stated CILOs, whilst in others (e.g., ECON509, FIN562) they are expressed as course objectives. Furthermore, some courses (e.g., FIN617, FIN524) use action verbs that are not commensurate with the level of graduate students such as 'understand' and 'identify'. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF in collaboration with DU should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to review the module specification documents with a degree of standardization in how syllabi are

presented and ensure that all CILOs are measurable and appropriate for the level of the programme.

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 presents a diverse array of courses, including their respective prerequisites (where applicable) and elective options for the MSF programme. The 'Financial Special Topics' (FIN798) is included in the Study Plan as a capstone course that is intended to bring all the MSF topics together. The Panel confirmed in interviews that the programme doesn't include a capstone project/ dissertation component. Examining the Study Plan, the Panel found it difficult to discern a clear course-by-course progression due to the absence of logical order in course codes of the prerequisite courses (e.g., FIN524, FIN555, FIN553). Additionally, some courses, such as Islamic Finance, Advanced Financial Analytics, and FinTech, share the same code (798), with their contents vaguely described as variable. The Panel discussed these issues during the interviews but observes that unique and logically ordered course codes would enhance clarity in understanding the programme's course-by-course progression. The Panel advises the BIBF in collaboration with DU to assign distinct codes to each course and ensure their logical sequencing to provide a clear indication of course-by-course progression on the programme. Furthermore, the Panel suggests including information on contact hours and specific activities (e.g., lectures, seminars) for each course within the Study Plan to provide comprehensive details.
- The evidence presented to the Panel suggests that the MSF programme has undergone reaccreditation (in 2021) by the AACSB, indicating that necessary updates are implemented in accordance with professional standards. Additionally, the MSF programme has been restructured as recently as 2020 following a comprehensive review and evaluation. During the interviews, the Panel was informed that the programme has recently been partially, or substantially, revised and is currently being tested in the United States prior to roll-out/amendment for Bahrain delivery.
- The Panel observes from the Study Plan and module specification documents that there is an appropriate balance between theory and practice and knowledge and skills in the curriculum of the MSF programme. There are appropriate structures such as the oversight of Advisory and Curriculum Committees and benchmarking of ILOs with the AACSB requirements to ensure this balance is achieved. For instance, the minutes of meeting of the Academic Advisory Committee dated 23 October 2022 include a discussion of the

restructuring of the MSF programme to enhance the practical contents. The Panel is of the view that the mechanisms in place are appropriate.

- Overall, the course contents of the MSF cover most elements expected. As noted in the Study Plan and Module Specification documents, the courses and topics are consistent with international standards and recent developments in Finance. There is a balanced mix of introductory modules (e.g., FIN555), intermediate modules (e.g., FIN523), and more advanced modules (e.g., FIN553). Overall, the Panel is of the view that the courses and contents are appropriate in terms of depth and breadth.
- The textbooks and references used to support the delivery of the MSF programme are generally appropriate and comparable to those in similar programmes at other institutions. Based on submitted evidence and interviews, the Panel is of the view that the course materials and delivery of teaching and learning are appropriately informed by recent research findings.
- There are observable occupational inputs from the BIBF Advisory Board, and clear evidence of local contextualisation of the MSF curriculum in meeting the needs of Bahrain or wider GCC region. During the interviews, the Panel confirmed that the programme considers the business, cultural and societal context of Bahrain and that issues of 'the cultural and linguistic sensitivity' of Bahrain were considered as part of DU faculty preparation. Overall, the Panel is of the view that local context and cultural sensitivity are embedded in the delivery of the programme.

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

- The SER indicates that the teaching and learning in the MSF programme is guided by a set of teaching and learning policies. These are articulated in the Teaching and Learning strategy and Teaching Guides for Faculty at DePaul, which provide guidance on a range of teaching methods, as well as the AACSB standards, which encourage the use of varied methods. Evidence in the form of a weblink, the '2020 AACSB Guiding Principles and Standards', Faculty Handbook, and a 'Teaching Statement' is provided to the Panel. There is no cross reference between teaching philosophes at the level of the DCOB or KGSB, although there is a description in the SER of talks and seminars that are available to BIBF-based students, which was confirmed in interviews with current students and alumni.
- A wide range of teaching and learning methods and practice is encouraged as per the evidence presented to the Panel. The methods encompass lectures, case studies, on-going

analysis, group discussion, and problem-solving activities. The teaching methods encourage active and independent learning consistent with the institutional mission and teaching statements. The Panel observes in the course documents that several modules, such as 'Financial Management' (FIN555) and 'Advanced Corporate Finance' (FIN553), integrate research capabilities through the inclusion of case studies in the learning process. The Panel appreciates the variety of teaching and learning methods and the comprehensive resources provided to faculty to facilitate their implementation.

- According to the SER, a variety of teaching modalities, including e-learning is available in the programme. Evidence provided to the Panel refers to the availability of online learning platforms and e-library which are communicated to students during inductions. The Panel notes that e-learning continues to be part of the learning process after the COVID-19 pandemic, with an active DePaul Online Teaching Series (DOTS) in place for faculty training. The Panel affirmed during interviews the e-learning capabilities of the existing learning management platform.
- The teaching and learning policies and guide encourage hands-on learning experience which is facilitated by the integration of internships, projects, and community engagement into the curriculum. The Module Specification documents evince the implementation of this learning approach, which encourages students' participation in learning and provides them with practical and professional exposure. Interviews with faculty, students and alumni highlight support mechanisms, including professional events such as talks and guest speakers, offered to students. The Panel is satisfied that students' participation in learning and their professional exposure are encouraged in the delivery of the programme.
- Although the MSF programme does not include a dedicated research module, the teaching and learning methods incorporate research capabilities, as outlined in several Module Specification documents. Students engage with relevant literature, as indicated in the submitted evidence (e.g., FIN555, FIN553) and are exposed to practical applied research concepts in the programme (FIN798).
- The teaching and learning policies and guidelines promote a comprehensive approach to learning encompassing formal, informal, and non-formal methods. This approach is facilitated by the career-oriented and practical components integrated into various courses. In addition, students are provided with access to online resources such as LinkedIn Learning and KellstadtCORE platform, career coaching and career events, amongst others, as confirmed during the interviews.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- According to the SER, the assessment framework for the programme is based on the AACSB standards and the 'Assessment of Learning Process' of DU. Weblinks provided to the Panel details extensive assessment practices, assessment templates and rubrics as well as general policies on grading. The SER also clarifies that no procedures exist for moderation at DU. However, as explained in Indicator 3.1 (Efficiency of Assessment), the current practices are not sufficient to ensure consistent implementation of the assessment methods and fairness of grading. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF in conjunction with DU should articulate a clear process and mechanism for ensuring consistent assessments and fairness of grading that meet relevant professional and academic standards.
- The assessment framework is available online and easily accessible. The Graduate Student Handbook contains information on assessment procedures, grading, academic integrity, and appeal processes. However, the Panel notes that the Handbook, last updated in 2011, lacks information on academic attainment threshold expectations and does not include weblinks to online policies and procedures. The additional evidence, presented as an update, does not clearly highlight specific changes. Moreover, the Graduate Student Handbook references decisions about alcohol that may not align with the cultural context in Bahrain, but this was discussed satisfactorily in interviews. The Panel recommends that the BIBF in conjunction with DU should ensure that the Graduate Student Handbook is regularly updated for cultural sensitivity with clear weblinks provided to each policy and procedure as appropriate.
- Evidence provided to the Panel indicates that both formative and summative assessment tools are employed in the MSF programme in a diverse manner. Formative assessments, including in-class activities, ongoing analysis and team discussion, offer continuous feedback to enhance students' learning, while summative assessments gauge the extent of students' acquired knowledge. The evidence indicates that comprehensive feedback and comments are given on summative assessments, and interviews with faculty members, students and alumni affirmed that feedback is timely. The Panel is of the view that the formative and summative assessment functions are appropriate.
- There is an Academic Integrity Policy for addressing academic misconduct which outlines various forms of misconduct. Instances of misconduct are addressed by the responsible faculty member (instructor sanctions) or the Academic Integrity Board as appropriate, but the Associate Provost reviews all initial sanctions. Samples of investigated malpractice cases and outcomes are provided to the Panel as proof of the policy and procedures being

implemented. The Panel is of the view that the measures in place to address academic misconduct 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: *Partially Addressed*

- Admission requirements are clearly outlined at the DU/BIBF websites and are also shown in the programme brochure. Applicants to the MSF programme apply directly to DU *via* the website. Whilst the admission requirements are sensible and largely in line with the level of the programme, it does not stipulate the minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) requirement. During interviews, the Panel learned that admission scores of CGPA less than 3.0 were accepted, largely when accompanied with work experience, however, the level of work experience (length of time and nature) that would result in a lower CGPA being acceptable was not determined. In the Panel's view, this does not reflect local and international norms where a CGPA of 3.0 is usual. In addition, there is no remedial or conditional admission pathway for sub-CGPA 3.0 scores. The requirement of the English language proficiency is comparable to local and international norms, providing the students' first degree was completed in English. TOEFL/IELTS requirements are stated on websites, although other evidence did not stipulate the same detail on English language criteria. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF in collaboration with DU should clarify the admission requirements with regard to the CGPA admission score, to be in line with national and international norms, and ensure that these are published to potential applicants.
- Student data shows higher numbers of female to male students and modest enrolment numbers for the MSF programme. During interviews, faculty and administrators expressed confidence in their approach to 'Equal Opportunities', and it was clear within the documentation that the gender of applicants are reported *via* metrics. However, the Panel noted that disability is not reported at the point of application. The Panel also confirmed during interviews that there is no transfer of credits permitted and DU/BIBF do not permit Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to the MSF programme. The SER outlined

a standard orientation programme, and this was confirmed as excellent by students during the interviews. The Panel confirmed that no remedial courses for inadequately prepared students are in place and recommends that BIBF in coordination with DU should establish a remedial/conditional pathway and that student progress through these pathways is closely monitored and reported annually/cohort-wise.

- Benchmark data provided by DU on admission criteria demonstrates comparator institutions all operate within the norms implemented by the programme. However, it was observed by the Panel that DU admission policy has not been reviewed formally since its inception (20 years ago). Whilst the Panel was provided with evidence during the Site Visit that admission policy is discussed with stakeholders *via* the Advisory Board, it is recommended that BIBF in coordination with DU should formalize the process of reviewing the admission policy and ensure that this is done periodically.

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: Addressed

- As per the SER, the Faculty Handbook contains all relevant information on recruitment, induction (orientation), promotion/tenure of faculty. The Panel confirmed during interviews that Equal Opportunities are inherent within the detailed and appropriate recruitment and selection process of staff. The Faculty Accredited Data list highlights a broad range of nationalities which implies that this is successful. Details were provided to the Panel regarding the Annual Performance review process, which is comparable to other international academic institutions, with clear faculty evaluation forms aiding this process in a fair and equitable way. The process of induction/orientation, outlined within the documentation, is clear and appropriate. The Panel is of the view that policies and procedures for academic staff meet conventional higher education norms and align with strategic plans.
- The Faculty Handbook sets forth the expectation to conduct research and provide scholarship as primary responsibilities of faculty. These expectations, central to the role of instructor/academic faculty are embedded in committee roles and underpinned in recruitment and selection procedures of faculty at DU. These are further embodied in institutional missions and research plans at college and university levels. Faculty workload is outlined in the Faculty Handbook and follows realistic expectations typical of higher education. Specific details were provided regarding the breakdown of academic

workload between research, community engagement and teaching, which is considered at an appropriate level.

- DU is a long-established university and is appropriately staffed with faculty holding mostly appropriate qualifications for delivering the MSF programme. Full Curriculum Vitas have been provided for all academic staff, indicating an appropriate range of academic qualifications, specialisations and professional experience to teach on the programme. It was apparent within the faculty allocated data that the faculty comprises 34 professors, 38 associate professors and 18 assistant professors. In addition, there are 38 instructors and 136 adjunct instructors to support the students. There is diversity in the faculty staff in terms of gender, race, ethnicity and working hours.
- Professional Development (PD) forms part of faculty evaluation. Information about PD is listed in the Faculty Handbook as well as the recognised awards for PD. During interviews, the Panel was informed of the ongoing nature of training that pertains to online learning and security, and that faculty are encouraged to undertake PD activities. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence on PD activities undertaken by faculty delivering the MSF programme, and there was no reference to policies, procedures, budgets, or arrangements for PD as they might relate to the programme or to Bahrain. For example, there is no mention of cultural sensitivity training for faculty, although BIBF staff do provide such orientations as observed in interviews. Hence, the Panel recommends that DU in collaboration with the BIBF should develop suitable arrangements for the PD activities presented to the faculty, especially those related to the cultural sensitivity of Bahrain, and ensure that PD activities are regularly monitored and evaluated.
- The Faculty Handbook outlines measures for recruitment, appointment and appraisal, which aims at ensuring the retention of highly qualified academic staff members. During the site visit interviews, the retention of staff was explored, and the Panel noticed that many DU faculty are long-service holders indicating an intrinsic regard for retention of academic faculty and staff. Demand for high-quality research-active academic faculty is a perpetual task, yet the Panel was given sufficient grounds to believe recruitment and retention of faculty is not overly problematic at DU.

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 facilities at BIBF are described in the SER as spacious, equipped with latest technologies such as smart/interactive white boards, and motion activated cameras. A

weblink enabled remote access to BIBF facilities/estate. The MSF does not require specific teaching spaces and no specific software needs. Class sizes are appropriate for the stated maximum numbers of students. The BIBF campus is purpose-built and includes a large auditorium, library, classrooms, advisory rooms, clinic, café/recreation facilities, prayer rooms, elevators for disability access etc. The Panel appreciates the state-of-the-art facilities and resources providing students with a first-class learning environment.

- Information Technology (IT) can be considered ‘state of the art’ and is comparable to facilities internationally. IT facilities are sufficient to support teaching and learning on the MSF programme. The Panel notes the helpful inclusion of the IT and Operations Ticket Log (2022-2023) showing the log of IT queries and the time taken to address them. IT security policies and procedures are appropriate, although the Panel notes none of the policies have policy control sheets indicating who is responsible for them and when policies were enacted and are due for renewal/updating. Adopting such an approach would ensure policies remain under constant review. The Panel suggests that the BIBF adopts a policy control sheet for each policy indicating responsible parties, when the policy was enacted, and when it is to be reviewed.
- BIBF has a range of policies and procedures to ensure resource deployment is effective and appropriate. Physical space and stock and e-library stock are cited in the SER as sufficient to meet student needs on the MSF programme. Mainstream subscriptions to electronic data bases and e-books are evidenced. Students also have electronic access to DU facilities in the United States. The library at the BIBF includes private study spaces and group study rooms on a bookable arrangement. Overall, the Panel is satisfied with the current arrangements.
- During site visit interviews, it became clear that there are appropriate formal arrangements to ensure sufficiency and adequacy of resources to support teaching, learning and scholarship. Students and those delivering support to them were adequately resourced and this was regularly evaluated. Conventional mechanisms exist to capture resource utilization and to address stakeholder voices.

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 offers a suite of Management Information Systems commensurate with an education institution of this type, which is envisaged to maximize the student learning experience. The system used by DU for all users is titled ‘Campus Connect’ which enables users to access course information, review grade history, request reports, view financial statements

etc. Orientation for this is provided by BIBF/DU. Desire2Learn (D2L) is DU's dedicated Learning Management System containing a wide variety of instructional technologies including mobile applications, similarity detection software, EndNote/citation management, course management information etc. and the Panel observed in interviews the D2L system directly. Resource utilisation in Bahrain is the responsibility of BIBF and examples of library utilisation was provided. Informed decision-making is enabled due to the Campus Connect system which can be employed for use by students, employees, and faculty. Students are provided with full guidance on this system during orientation.

- The SER was silent on matters of security of learner records and assurance of record accuracy, although the Panel noted the comprehensive extent of policies and procedures pertaining to IT generally. Interviews with DU support staff and alumni confirmed robust approaches to learner record management including use of a dedicated App and restrictions on changing/updating records and certification and transcripts in line with higher education sector norms. Sample certificates and transcripts were provided to the Panel as evidence of accurate recording of achieved learning by students.

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: Addressed

- The SER did not include sufficient details on the support provided to students. However, from interviews with students, alumni and faculty, the Panel confirmed that appropriate student support in terms of library, laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, guidance and care are in place. As noted above, the BIBF campus is purpose-built and thus well-equipped for students with mobility issues. For students with special needs, there is a specific centre of support. Although the SER was silent about the needs of women, the Panel is satisfied with arrangements that cater for women needs, which were described as highly satisfied by female students/alumnae during interviews.
- Students are provided with career guidance services and support to help them prepare for work and plan their career paths *via* the Career Management Centre. This is extensive and ranges from careers fairs and events to more bespoke training on interviews and curriculum vita writing. The programme also utilises the systems 'KellstadtCORE' and 'Handshake' to enable students to search for jobs, make career appointments and review available events, improving the ease at which students can find information and manage their careers. The Panel learned during interviews that suitable career guidance services are in place, and that BIBF offers employment finding services through its network members.

- It was clear during the site visit that there are specific arrangements in place for newly admitted students and staff who can be reached through live chat, email, phone call or face-to-face meetings to provide support and events for students who are new to campus. In addition, there is also the Office for Academic Advising Support to provide further sources of support. The Panel is of the view that the support offered to newly admitted students is appropriate.
- Although the SER and the provided evidence state that all students have an academic advisor, interviews with students and alumni indicated that not all students were aware of specifically who was their appointed academic advisor. Nonetheless, they appraised the excellent levels of support by DU faculty if any encountered academic difficulties. Therefore, the Panel suggests that each student is specifically notified of their academic advisor for the avoidance of doubt.
- 'At risk' students are identified, monitored and provided with the needed support through the 'BlueStar' system, which enables instructors and advisors to send feedback directly to their students. Academic progress surveys are also used as a way of keeping track of students' development. The Panel was assured that the processes in place to monitor students' progress were appropriate, undertaken regularly and that intervention was taken when necessary to support the students. The system is integrated to ensure there are no gaps in information flows between students and those who are there to support them. The Panel notes based on the demonstration session and interviews that the system is robust and appropriate, which assured the Panel of ongoing and appropriate academic advising.
- The SER was silent on the monitoring and assessment of the support services offered to students, and the evidence offered was unsatisfactory. Hence, the Panel recommends that BIBF in coordination with DU should utilise redacted data to assess the effectiveness of BlueStar in monitoring 'at-risk' students' progress and applied intervention mechanisms.

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: Addressed

- As indicated in the SER and clarified during interviews, assessment of student learning at DU is guided by a formal academic assessment process, which allows faculty to choose their own assessment methods in assessing student's work. The Panel examined the course files of various courses and found that the assessment methods typically included quizzes, simulations, case write-up assignments and projects, mid-term examinations and a final examination. However, the Panel found that the composition of the 'final mark' varied widely across courses, for example, in some cases marks were awarded for class attendance/participation and were counted towards the 'final mark'. No rubrics were available to defend the award of participation/attendance, though, the Panel was informed during the interviews that awarding marks on participation/attendance is a matter for individual instructors. The Panel also noticed excessive use of multiple-choice questions in some course assessments. Therefore, the Panel is of the view that there is a need to articulate a clear process and mechanism for ensuring consistent assessments and fairness of grading (see Indicator 1.5).
- The Panel noticed that some course files did not include marked student work for each assessment issued, and when requested, it is often provided without any rubrics or without all exemplars of the assessment regimen. Therefore, the Panel advises that the course files include samples of student work for every assessment and be accompanied with assessment rubrics.
- DCOB at DU has a well-designed Assurance of Learning (AoL) plan that sets out the process for ensuring the achievement of learning goals and their associated learning outcomes and the mechanisms for aligning assessment of student learning to the ILOs. The Panel found evidence of how assessments are aligned with the CILOs and PILOs. The Panel is of the view that mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessments with learning outcomes are appropriate.

- The AoL specifies achievement levels that would be regarded as meeting the PILOs. There is an expectation for 80% of students in the MSF programme to perform at an 'acceptable level' on the PILOs. The Panel found examples of the mapping of assessment results to the PILOs, and the determination of minimum acceptable performance thresholds. The AoL process is monitored by the College Assessment Committee.
- DU has an institutional-wide Graduate Curriculum Committee which is responsible for curriculum development and review. The Panel confirmed during interviews with faculty and senior management that the Graduate Curriculum Committee and the College Assessment Committee have been effective in ensuring continuing improvements to the programmes offered at BIBF.

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

- The Academic Integrity Policy (AIP) clearly identifies the various forms of academic integrity violations and their associated sanctions. During interviews with faculty and students, the Panel was informed of the various media and platforms through which the AIP is disseminated to students, and how both faculty and support staff ensure, during student orientation and in class sessions, that the AIP is clearly understood and applied by students. Interviewed faculty confirmed that these initiatives have been successful in deterring academic malpractices such as plagiarism in the BIBF programmes since 2018. The Panel is satisfied that policies and procedures relating to academic integrity violations are well-disseminated and clearly understood by students.
- The processes for deterring and detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct include the use of 'Turnitin', 'Lockdown Browser' and 'Integrity Advocate' for online examination proctoring. Samples of Turnitin reports that were provided to the Panel showed varying similarity scores (from 1% to 19%). The Panel learned during interviews with faculty and students that while students are generally encouraged to use 'Turnitin' to check their assignments, it is not mandatory for students and faculty. The Panel confirmed during interviews that there is no limit to the number of times that the students are allowed to resubmit their plagiarized work. This, in the Panel's view, is very unconventional. Thus, the Panel recommends that BIBF in coordination with DU should review its practices regarding the policies and procedures of academic integrity to limit the number of allowed resubmissions and make the use of Turnitin mandatory for all appropriate assessed work.

- The Panel found evidence of cases of academic integrity violations that were recorded between 2013 and 2018. Interviewed faculty and senior management confirmed that there have been no academic integrity violations in any of the BIBF programmes since 2018.

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: Not Applicable

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 reviewed a sample of the students' assessed work and found that the level of students' achievements is generally appropriate. Interviewed alumni and employers also expressed satisfaction with the skills and competencies of the MSF graduates, and the alumni confirmed that the programme has provided them with the required knowledge and skills for the job market, and also made them versatile.

- The SER states that the programme has a very high completion rate. Data provided in the submitted evidence show that there was a 100% completion rate for the 2021-2022 intake, which has been the only MSF intake in the last 5 years.
- The Panel did not find any evidence to show that either DU or BIBF conducts any formal graduate tracing or tracking of alumni to collect data and information on their post-graduation experiences. Interviewed faculty and alumni confirmed that an alumni event was recently held as a precursor to the establishment of a BIBF alumni chapter. The Panel recommends that DU/BIBF should conduct formal graduate tracing to collect information on the career paths of alumni as it could help in guiding curriculum changes and identify areas for improvement in the programme.
- The Panel found evidence of a graduate satisfaction survey in which MSF alumni expressed satisfaction rate of 90% on aspects relating to the programme aims, PILOs, and overall assessment of the programme. The survey report showed that 90% of respondents expressed satisfaction with how the programme equipped them with the knowledge, skills and mindset required to lead and innovate. Interviewed faculty and alumni confirmed that graduates from the programme are all in gainful employment, with some in very senior executive positions. The Panel did not find any evidence of similar employer satisfaction surveys, but employers interviewed also expressed satisfaction with BIBF graduates' profiles.

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

- The programme is supported by a set of institutional policies and regulations, primarily outlined in the Quality Assurance Review (QAR) process conducted by the Compliance Office of DU. The QAR process and policies are accessible *via* a weblink and cover broader (community, human resource and workplace safety) responsibilities. The policies also cover the Quality Assurance (QA) aspects of the programme such as Assessment of Learning Process at DePaul, Academic Integrity and AoL as per AACSB requirements. These policies are disseminated to relevant stakeholders *via* an online portal and a Graduate Student Handbook.
- DU's QA resides in its QAR process which aims to evaluate performance against DU's own management standards and constitutes a mechanism for the consistent implementation of policies and procedures. The Academic Program Review (APR) is DU's mechanism to promote continuous quality improvements of its programmes with the aim of ensuring timed-action plans are produced. This process is overseen by an Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) and the Dean. Furthermore, the BIBF Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) data provides a mechanism to ensure a consistent implementation of actions plan. The Panel notes from the evidence provided that various action plans are documented along with their implementation status. The Panel is satisfied that the QA management system in place is appropriate.
- The training by the Compliance Office of DU provides a mechanism for staff to understand the QA process as well as their role. Academic staff are also notified of updates to the policies *via* email and regular departmental meetings. However, an examination of Faculty, Staff and Student Manuals shows none of them have any information on QA policies or processes. The Panel recommends that DU should include bespoke sections in Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks explaining the policies and procedures by which

QA principles are monitored and enacted to ensure stakeholder constituencies understand their roles in the QA processes.

- QA issues are recorded and tracked within the framework of AMRs. Furthermore, various mechanisms, including Assessment of Learning Process and 'Annual Assessment Reports' facilitate the evaluation of the QA system; however, these are mainly at the DCOB/KGSB level as confirmed in interviews. The Panel suggest that BIBF, in collaboration with DU, expand the monitoring and evaluation of the QA system to encompass the broader BIBF level.

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

- The organization charts show a similar hierarchy and clear lines of responsibilities, with the Deans being in charge of the effective management of academic programmes and reporting to a Provost. The organisational chart of BIBF reflects its business development role, finance, HR, business and operations functions under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who reports to audit and ad-hoc committees, who in turn report to the Chairman, whilst the Chairman reports to the Board of Directors.
- The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the management posts and committees that run the MSF programme are clearly stated in the respective post and committee documents. The documents clearly state the membership and duties of the various committees as well as the tenure of members. The Panel discussed satisfactorily the existing arrangements during interviews.
- The partnership agreement between DU and BIBF is clear on the academic responsibilities and the custodianship of the academic standards of the MSF programme. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and the SER clearly states that all academic-related activities are the responsibility of DU whilst BIBF facilitates business development and administrative logistics, including marketing of the programme.
- The management of the programme is essentially a collaborative effort, drawing on the contributions of dedicated faculty and administrative staff. There are biweekly meetings between the Directors of DCOB/KGSB and the programme administrators at BIBF as per their agenda and minutes of meetings, which cover programme-related issues ranging from enrollment to graduation. However, insights from interviews indicate that the programme management could be enhanced through increased involvement of the BIBF

team. Consequently, the Panel suggests that DU, in collaboration with BIBF, explore opportunities to foster a deeper collaboration in the programme's management.

- The Panel acknowledges that students enrolled in the programme at BIBF receive essential services and support on par with those accessible to their counterparts in the United States. The instructional delivery at BIBF is carried out by DU faculty and adheres to the same standards of AoL outlined in the AACSB accreditation. Additional insights into current practices and overall student satisfaction with the learning experience were gathered through interviews conducted by the Panel.

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

- According to the SER, the MSF programme underwent revisions in the academic years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, with comprehensive assessments documented in the Annual Assessment Report: Division/College/School documents for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 academic years. Additionally, the outcomes and enhancements resulting from programme reviews (as highlighted in the Additional Assessment Information Requested Cycle 2019-2022) were presented to the Panel as supporting evidence and were thoroughly discussed in interviews.
- The primary mechanism at BIBF and DU for overseeing the implementation of annual evaluation recommendations is the AMR process. For example, the AMR for the 2021-2022 academic year outlines various outcomes, action plans, their status, and assigns follow-up responsibilities. Furthermore, oversight on the implementation of improvement recommendations is reinforced by interactions among curriculum management, the Graduate Curriculum Committees, and the Advisory Board. Recent approvals of the changes to the MSF programme are evidenced in brief minutes of relevant committee, emails, and restructuring documentation. The Panel is of the view that the mechanisms are appropriate. However, the Panel noticed that the BIBF AMR data contains a raft of information, some of it superfluous as it relates to undergraduate degrees and other academic institutions. Similarly, evidence of assessment reports from DU is not Bahrain-specific. The Panel recommends that BIBF should include only DU-specific data in the AMR and assessment reports for the programme.
- The policy of periodic reviews of the MSF programme is informed by the APR process headed by the APRC and its Director as well as the Office of Academic Affairs of DU. The

APR process highlights the review requirements and schedule for each college/faculty. Furthermore, periodic review of the MSF programme is informed by Standard 5 of the AACSB.

- The evidence presented to the Panel indicates that DU implements a continuous improvement review, rather than a periodic review per se, in line with Standard 5 of the AACSB. Several evidence presented to the Panel to demonstrate the implementation of regular and periodic review, including a comprehensive report titled 'Continuous Improvement Review Fall 2020', sample five-yearly review report (i.e., Memorandum of Understanding and Assessment Plan), and a proposal for restructuring of the programme. The Panel learned from interviews with internal and external stakeholders (i.e., students, alumni, employers and Advisory Board members) that their feedback is consistently sought and contributes to the review and revision of the programme. However, documentary evidence presented to the Panel reveals that student feedback is predominantly focused on the selection of elective courses. Consequently, the Panel recommends that BIBF and DU should improve the feedback collection process from internal stakeholders, ensuring that periodic reviews of the MSF programme integrate comprehensive input from internal stakeholders.
- The Panel, based on the provided evidence and interviews, acknowledges that there are suitable mechanisms in place to ensure the effective implementation of periodic reviews and associated improvements.

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 Benchmarking Report for Programs in Bahrain, presented to the Panel indicates that a desktop benchmarking exercise was conducted against similar local and international (cross-border) programmes. The benchmarking report covers various aspects of the programme, including admission criteria, learning outcomes, market analysis and recommendations for improvement. It also highlights various strengths and areas for improvement, including the integration of advanced technology, global dimensions into the curriculum, and alumni engagement. However, the Panel notes, based on the benchmarking report, that the exercise was completed as recently as December 2019, making it unlikely to have influenced decisions on the programme. Considering the two-decade history of the MSF programme at BIBF, the Panel would anticipate the conduct of multiple benchmarking exercises in the past. Therefore, the Panel recommends that DU

and BIBF should implement mechanisms for regular benchmarking to timely inform decisions regarding the MSF programme.

- The Panel reviewed a summary of graduate survey data, but the sample size is limited (only 4 participants). While the collected data is analyzed and reported as part of the AMR data to inform decision-making, the small sample size raises concerns about the reliability of the information for programme decisions. Therefore, the Panel suggests that BIBF and DU explore ways to enhance the response rate of graduate surveys. Additionally, although there is evidence of interactions between the programme management and external stakeholders, the Panel notes that the feedback from them is unstructured, and there is no evidence of formal analysis. Consequently, the Panel recommends that BIBF, in collaboration with DU, should establish a formal mechanism for collecting and analyzing structured feedback from external stakeholders to better inform programme decisions.
- The AMR data serves as the main mechanism for monitoring the implementation of improvements, incorporating stakeholder feedback and corresponding action points with designated owners and timelines. Formal communication between BIBF/DU and the Advisory Boards is presented to the Panel as evidence. Moreover, the minutes of meeting of the BIBF Advisory Board dated 23 October 2022 highlights programme-level discussions, demonstrating effective communication of outcomes to stakeholders. Furthermore, interviews with various stakeholders confirm that they are kept informed about programme-related outcomes and improvements.

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

- According to the SER the advisory board functions on the MSF programme are provided by the Driehaus College of Business Advisory Council (DCBAC), and the BIBF Advisory Board, which meets regularly. The DCBAC is composed of discipline experts as per the minutes of meeting provided to the Panel. The BIBF Advisory Board on the other hand is composed mainly of academic staff in addition to alumni representatives, as per the minutes of meeting dated 26 July 2023. The DCBAC and the BIBF Advisory Board have clear ToRs.
- The Panel notes that DCBAC and the BIBF Advisory Board engage well with their respective institutions to address matters affecting the programme, as evidenced by the provided meeting minutes and affirmed during interviews. For instance, the meeting

minutes of the DCBAC on November 16, 2023, cover agenda items such as career center updates, entrepreneurship resources, and resource utilization. Similarly, the meeting minutes of the BIBF Advisory Board include discussions related to programme review, competition, and student recruitment (as per the minutes dated October 23, 2022), as well as entrepreneurship skills development and annual monitoring reporting (as per the minutes dated June 26, 2023).

- During interviews, the Panel observed positive and constructive dialogue between the DCBAC and the BIBF Advisory Board, especially since they were meeting for the first time, indicating that programme will gain from increased collaboration between them. Therefore, the Panel suggests a closer alignment between the DCBAC and the BIBF Advisory Board to ensure collaborative opportunities are maximized.
- The Panel acknowledges that there has been a recent labour market study by BIBF (in 2022) to ensure that the MSF programme remains relevant to the labour market. The study was data-driven and informed the strategic direction of the BIBF. Although the sample size for the study was relatively small, involving 49 interviewees and over 70 feedback from professionals, the Panel notes that the study identified key emerging themes and areas to ensure the programme's alignment with international and local trends. The Panel appreciates the efforts made by both DU and BIBF in conducting a thorough market analysis to ensure the ongoing relevance of the programme.
- The Panel observes that the continuous monitoring of the existing mechanisms occurs through various channels, including Advisory Board meetings, HR networking sessions and AMRs. For instance, the action plans resulting from the market study and their corresponding statuses are documented and reported as standing items on the AMR dated 16 March 2023. The Panel is of the view that the mechanisms aimed at assessing labour market and societal needs are appropriately monitored and reviewed.

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 Master of Science in Finance (Hosted Programme – DePaul University) offered in partnership with the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance.

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

1. The long and well-established professional relationship between both DePaul University and the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance which is underpinned by trust principles and a willingness to adapt programmes to meet local Bahrain and Gulf Cooperation Council needs.
2. The variety of teaching and learning methods and the comprehensive resources provided to faculty to facilitate their implementation.
3. The state-of-the-art facilities and resources providing students with a first-class learning environment.
4. The efforts made by both DePaul University and Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance in conducting a thorough market analysis to ensure the ongoing relevance of the programme.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance in cooperation with DePaul University should:

1. Maintain a formal risk register to record risks related to the programme and ensure that these risks are identified, monitored, and effectively addressed.
2. Ensure that graduate attributes and the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are clearly stated in all documentation and websites of DePaul University and Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance.
3. Develop a comprehensive Programme Specification Document covering all essential information, including programme aims, learning outcomes and associated mappings is created and availed via the DePaul University and Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance websites and Student Handbook
4. Ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to review the module specification documents with a degree of standardization in how syllabi are presented and ensure

that all Course Intended Learning Outcomes are measurable and appropriate for the level of the programme.

5. Articulate a clear process and mechanism for ensuring consistent assessments and fairness of grading that meet relevant professional and academic standards.
6. Ensure that the Graduate Student Handbook is regularly updated for cultural sensitivity with clear weblinks provided to each policy and procedure as appropriate.
7. Clarify the admission requirements with regard to the Cumulative Grade Point Average admission score, to be in line with national and international norms, and ensure that these are published to potential applicants.
8. Establish a remedial/conditional pathway and that student progress through these pathways is closely monitored and reported annually/cohort-wise.
9. Formalize the process of reviewing the admission policy and ensure that this is done periodically.
10. Develop suitable arrangements for the professional development activities presented to the faculty, especially those related to the cultural sensitivity of Bahrain, and ensure that professional development activities are regularly monitored and evaluated.
11. Utilise redacted data to assess the effectiveness of BlueStar in monitoring 'at-risk' students' progress and applied intervention mechanisms.
12. Review its practices regarding the policies and procedures of academic integrity to limit the number of allowed resubmissions and make the use of Turnitin mandatory for all appropriate assessed work.
13. Conduct formal graduate tracing to collect information on the career paths of alumni.
14. Include bespoke sections in Faculty, Staff and Student Handbooks explaining the policies and procedures by which Quality Assurance principles are monitored and enacted to ensure stakeholder constituencies understand their roles in the Quality Assurance processes.
15. Include only DePaul University-specific data in the annual monitoring report and assessment reports for the programme.
16. Improve the feedback collection process from internal stakeholders, ensuring that periodic reviews of the Master of Science in Finance programme integrate comprehensive input from internal stakeholders.
17. Implement mechanisms for regular benchmarking to timely inform decisions regarding the Master of Science in Finance programme.

18. Establish a formal mechanism for collecting and analyzing structured feedback from external stakeholders to better inform programme decisions