

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland -Medical
University of Bahrain
School of Nursing and Midwifery
Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 5 –7 April 2021

HA012-C3-R012

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Acronyms

APA	Annual Programme Analysis
APR	Academic Programme Review
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BSc. N	Bachelor of Science in Nursing
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CPC	Clinical Placement Coordinator
CRM	Careers and Alumni Customer Relations Management
CSS	Centre for Student Success
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EBP	Evidence-Based Practice
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HSEQ	Health, Safety, Environmental, and Quality
IPE	Interprofessional Education
ILO	Intended learning outcome
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MMRs	Module Monitoring Reports
MoU	Memoranda of understanding
MUN	Model United Nations
NGP	Nursing Graduate Profile
NMBI	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUI	National University of Ireland
PAB	Programme Advisory Board
PDU	Development Unit
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

QA	Quality Assurance
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMC	Quality Monitoring sub-Committee
QMS	Quality Management System
RCSI-MUB	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RCSI	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland
RSS	Research Summer School
SARA	Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs
SCAR	Student Clinical Assessment Report
SCARs	Student Clinical Academic Records
SONM	School of Nursing & Midwifery
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment
WHO	World Health Organization

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 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 judgments 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 judgment, 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 judgment 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*	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland- Medical University of Bahrain
College/ Department*	School of Nursing and Midwifery
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Science in Nursing
Qualification Approval Number	Cabinet of Ministers Decision No. (22 / 413) of 2004 Higher Education Council Letter No. (أ ت م - 75 / 2008) of 2008 Higher Education Council Decision No. (93) of Meeting (11/2008) of 2008 Higher Education Council Letter No. (أ ع م ت ع - 72 / 2016) of 2016
NQF Level	8
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Validation Date
Number of Units*	42
NQF Credit	480
Programme Aims*	To prepare professional and competent graduate nurses who possess the knowledge, skills and professionalism, and are able to provide safe nursing care services to individuals, families and communities in a variety of health care settings encompassing primary, secondary, and tertiary services at the national, regional and international level.
Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	Following completion of the programme, the student will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the professional values required, to fulfil the role of the registered nurse to deliver safe, quality, and compassionate care across the life span and spectrum of health care provision. • Possess the necessary knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes to assess, plan, prioritise, deliver and evaluate nursing care using a systematic process of nursing which engages the individual in receipt of care, their significant others and the multidisciplinary team. • Apply theoretical principles to the practice of nursing using clinical judgement, critical reasoning and reflection.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the scope of nursing practice in changing healthcare environments and how nurses can enhance access to care through specialist and advanced nursing practice roles. • Discuss care delivery systems in the local and international context. • Apply effective communications in an ever-increasing demanding and complex health care environment. • Recognise the importance of nursing research and its application and contribution to patient care. • Identify the importance of leadership and entrepreneurship by being creative and solution orientated whilst ensuring quality and safe care. • Commit to life-long learning to maintain and advance knowledge and understanding of the principles and values underpinning professional nursing practice. • Discuss nursing as an international profession and the impact of global trends in the delivery of nursing care.
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* Mandatory fields

III. Judgment Summary

The Programme's Judgment: 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	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
Standard 2	Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfied
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	Addressed
Standard 3	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	Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Addressed

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Partially Addressed
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	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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that the aims of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSc. N) programme are consistent with the mission and strategic plan of Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI-MUB). There is clear institutional and programme planning. The membership and representation of RCSI-MUB Academic Board and the various committees within the School of Nursing & Midwifery (SONM) promote smooth and organised planning. The programme was licenced by the Higher Education Council (HEC) in 2011 and has been placed on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Register since 2016. The SONM has a clear and detailed operational plan that covers the BSc. N programme.
- The programme team regularly evaluates the performance of the BSc. N programme and identifies areas that need improvement. The programme team also screens for some risks, such as health risks in the laboratories and clinical sites. However, the programme does not have a register of potential risks with mitigation actions. RCSI-MUB has a crisis management plan, but the plan mainly deals with non-academic crisis scenarios. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the SONM should create a clear and detailed risk register that includes risk rating, mitigation actions, and management tools.
- The Panel notes that the BSc. N programme has satisfied the NQF level 8 requirements and has been placed on the NQF register since 2016. The NQF level and credits are clearly stated in the BSc. N programme profile and every module/course. The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) meet the NQF level 8 descriptors for knowledge, skills, and competencies. The academic policies of RCSI-MUB ensure that all programmes are aligned with the NQF.

- The Panel notes that the programme's title is concise and clearly indicates the type and level of the qualification. It is indicative of the curriculum content and learning experiences. The programme's title is consistently used on the printed and electronic publications of the programme. The title is also accurately stated on the certificate that students receive upon completion of the programme and is consistent with the RCSI-MUB certification policy.
- The programme's aims are clearly stated in the Nursing Graduate Profile (NGP). The Panel notes that the stated aims and competencies in the NGP are current and consistent with established international nursing standards. The NGP was revised in 2019 utilising national and international guidelines. During the virtual site visit interviews, the programme management confirmed that feedback and inputs from students, faculty, employers, examiners, and partners are utilised when aims and curriculum are revised. The programme's stakeholders confirmed that their inputs and feedback are sought in various ways and through events such as the Stakeholder Day. The Panel appreciates the good practices that the programme follows to keep stakeholders involved, such as the steering committees with the Ministry of Health, the Joint Board for RCSI-MUB and Private Hospitals Collaboration, and the Advisory Board membership, student representation in the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), the roles and functions of the Programme Advisory Board (PAB) and the Clinical Teaching & Learning Committee stakeholders.
- The programme's aims are consistent with the mission of RCSI-MUB. In reviewing the operational plan of the programme, the Panel notes that the goals, actions, and measurement of success are aligned with the strategic goals (pillars) of RCSI-MUB. The reports on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provide evidence that the programme contributes to achieving the RCSI-MUB mission and strategic goals of teaching and learning, research, and community outreach. The Panel suggests that the programme's operational plan is expanded to include potential risks and mitigation plans.
- During the virtual site visit interview with RCSI-MUB management, the Panel attempted to clarify the relationship between RCSI-MUB, known as RCSI Bahrain, and RCSI Dublin. The Panel notes that some policies, regulations, and strategies in RCSI Bahrain have been adopted from RCSI Dublin. The Panel also notes that most quality measures are conducted and analysed by RCSI-MUB.. Students who complete the programme receive two degrees: a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from RCSI-MUB and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the National University of Ireland (NUI).

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that there are no explicitly stated generic graduate attributes for RCSI-MUB. This information was verified during the virtual site visit interviews. The programme management team indicated that the PILOs reflect the graduate attributes and have been linked to every course in the programme.
- The Nursing Graduate Profile and the BSc. N. Programme Specification include learning domains and learning outcomes. The PILOs include knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, critical thinking skills, and transferable skills. The Panel notes that PILOs are generally appropriate for the type and level of degree awarded and are appropriately linked to the programme's aims.
- The PILOs are written using measurable action verbs. As per the NQF validation report, the PILOs satisfy the NQF level 8 descriptors for knowledge, skills, and competencies. While the PILOs have been aligned with some international standards, the Panel notes that there is no systematic benchmarking of the PILOs against those of similar national and regional programmes. Hence, the Panel recommends that the SONM should benchmark its PILOs against similar regional and local programmes, where applicable. The Panel also notes that the number of PILOs is relatively higher than similar programmes, which may affect the validity of evaluation. Hence, the Panel advises the SONM to reduce the number of PILOs when benchmarked. This advice is consistent with a suggestion provided to the programme by the NQF.
- The Panel notes that course descriptors include Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) that are appropriately linked to the level and content descriptors. The CILOs progression is consistent with the course-level progression. The CILOs satisfy the requirements of the NQF. The classification of CILOs as knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, critical thinking skills, and transferable skills helps to ensure the clarity and consistency of the CILOs' language as well as appropriate levels of cognitive complexities. However, the Panel notes that some CILOs were listed under irrelevant categories; therefore, the Panel advises the programme team to review the CILOs carefully and match them with the relevant competency category. The Panel also suggests that the programme use Bloom's taxonomy in the formulation of the CILOs, since the SER did not use or refer to any reference as such in the formulation of CILOs.

- The Panel notes that the programme specification includes the mapping of CILOs to PILOs and the course assessment blueprints include a mapping of the PILOs, CILOs, and assessment methods. However, the PILOs do not appear in the course descriptors and the number of CILOs is relatively higher than similar programmes. Hence, the Panel advises that the School should revise the number of CILOs and include CILOs to PILOs mapping in the course descriptors.
- The programme is not research-based. However, it includes a course on research and evidence-based nursing practise, which introduces students to the principles of scientific research and Evidence-Based Practise (EBP). The programme also includes a course on epidemiology and biostatistics, which familiarises students with basic epidemiological principles and uses and some biostatistics concepts. The outcomes, pedagogy, and evaluation methods are consistent and aligned with the programme outcomes.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that courses' organisation and sequence in the study plan are appropriate. The courses are organised following the programme NQF level. The study plan displays how the course level and the methods of instruction and evaluation progress from one level to the next. Every course descriptor includes the pre-requisites of the course, which the Panel found appropriate. As per the study plan, the student workload is reasonable, averaging 60 NQF credits per semester.
- The Panel notes that there are regular and systematic reviews of the BSc. N programme curriculum and courses by its stakeholders. Module Monitoring Reports (MMRs), Annual Programme Analysis (APA), and reports of external examiners include valuable data and feedback that are utilised to improve the programme and its curriculum. During the virtual site visit interviews, the programme management and faculty confirmed that the curriculum has been recently revised and updated to reflect current national and international academic and professional standards (e.g., Employer Graduate Skills Requirements for Higher Education in Bahrain, the Nurse Registration Programmes Standards and Requirements in Ireland, and the WHO Global Strategic Directions for Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery). However, the Panel notes that no intentional or systematic benchmarking was done against national, regional, or international programmes (see the recommendation under Indicator 4.4).

- The PILOs include both theory and clinical competencies. The PILOs guide the selection and development of appropriate theory and clinical courses. The curriculum and study plan have a reasonable balance of theory (56% of the hours) and clinical (44% of the hours). This balance is comparable to similar international programmes. In the virtual site visit interviews, the programme management team reported that they use stakeholders' feedback to evaluate the quality of theory and clinical teaching and students' need for additional learning experiences. Clinical partners and employers agreed that they find the programme's graduates to be equipped with sufficient knowledge and clinical experiences for their roles.
- Every course descriptor includes the contents to be covered. The Panel notes that the depth and breadth of the contents are generally appropriate to the level of the course and its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). Foundational courses (e.g., psychology microbiology, pharmacology) cover essential contents that prepare students to think like nurses; cognate courses (e.g., microbiology and pharmacology) cover contents that prepare students for clinical placement; and intermediate and advanced nursing courses cover contents that prepare students to transition to their future roles. The higher the course level, the deeper, more complex, and more specialised the contents. The NQF validation report has also affirmed the appropriateness of the depth and breadth of the programme's course contents.
- Most course descriptors include required textbooks and recommended learning materials. The Panel notes that most required textbooks in the nursing-specific courses are current and relevant to the subject matter. However, some courses (e.g., N106, N107, N108) include only recommended readings. The recommended readings in several course descriptors (e.g., N201, N202, N208) are outdated. Hence, the Panel recommends that the SONM should review the course descriptors to ensure that all courses have specific and current required and recommended learning materials.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The RCSI-MUB Teaching and Learning Strategy serves as the primary reference for teaching and learning planning. The Panel notes that the five-year strategy includes RCSI-MUB philosophy and priorities of teaching and learning. RCSI-MUB calls academics to utilise translational education to ensure that physical, virtual, academic, and social learning experiences are appropriate and suited to their students' needs and requirements. In addition, RCSI-MUB has institutional academic policies that govern different aspects of the educational process, including teaching, learning, and assessment.

- The teaching and learning methodologies are specified in every course descriptor. The teaching methodologies are aligned with RCSI-MUB philosophy and Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Panel notes that most teaching methods and learning activities stated in course descriptors are appropriate to the course type, level, and learning outcomes. The Panel also notes that the complexity of teaching and learning methods progresses from one level to the next. For example, in the 'Anatomy and Physiology I' (N101) course, teaching methods include lectures and tutorials; then, in the 'Fundamentals of Nursing II' (N207) course, case studies are added; and finally, in the Critical Care Nursing (N402) course, complex teaching methods such as EBP analysis discussions are included. The teaching methods and learning activities are varied and contribute to the attainment of outcomes. Most of the teaching methods are contemporary (e.g., case studies, EBP discussion, interactive lectures, group discussion). The effectiveness of teaching methods is evaluated by students, faculty, and external examiners.
- RCSI-MUB provides services and tools that promote e-learning. In the virtual site visit interviews, students reported that they have access to e-books, library e-resources, and various references in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The programme employs some e-learning activities such as virtual simulations. Since the breakdown of COVID-19, the programme has been using other virtual platforms such as Panopto, Turning Microsoft Teams, and Blackboard Collaborate. The effectiveness of some e-resources is evaluated regularly. For example, the students evaluated the effectiveness of e-books and based on their evaluation, e-books use was expanded. The Panel suggests that RCSI-MUB develops a separate e-learning teaching and learning policy to govern the specific aspects of e-learning.
- The Panel notes that independent and lifelong learning is one of the PILOs. The programme employs teaching and learning methods that promote active and independent learning, such as case-based learning and self-directed learning. Activities of self-directed learning are included in most course descriptors. Students are exposed to various training environments and clinical experiences needed to meet their learning needs and the ILOs of clinical courses. Tutors and mentors support students according to their needs at different levels during the programme. The more advanced the course, the less supervision they receive, promoting their independent learning in clinical training. The number of clinical hours and the support given to students enhance their confidence gradually and promote their independence. The programme also utilises non-threatening simulation and Interprofessional Education (IPE) experiences, which promote independent learning and self-efficacy.
- The students of the BSc. N programme learn to value and utilise the best available evidence in clinical practice. Some courses include activities where students critique and utilize EBP. The programme also employs activities to enhance student research

capabilities (e.g., the student Research Summer School (RSS) scheme and involving students with faculty scholarship activities).

- During the virtual site visit interviews, the students expressed appreciation toward the personal tutor system, the buddy programme, and other activities provided by the Centre for Student Success (CSS). They also reported enjoying attending conferences and Model United Nations (MUN) programmes, and other leadership programmes. The Panel appreciates the various informal and non-formal learning activities that RCSI-MUB and the BSc. N programme provide.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The assessment of student performance is governed by university-wide policies including the Fair & Consistent Assessment & Evaluation of Student Progress policy and the Examinations & Assessment Regulations. At the programme-level, there is a policy for marks and standards, examinations planning policy, clinical examinations policy and procedure, invigilator guidelines, examination execution policy & procedure, post examinations policy and procedure, and post assessment moderation guidance for staff, among others. The Panel notes that the aim and scope of these policies and regulations comply with the legislation and requirements of NUI, and HEC. The Panel notes that the assessment policies are comprehensive and ensure fair student evaluation.
- The policies, regulations, and procedures of assessment are published on the VLE. Students and faculty confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews that they have access to such materials on the VLE through their secured portals. Other documents (e.g., Nursing Curriculum Handbook) refer to these policies and encourage students to access them from the VLE. External stakeholders (e.g., external examiners, clinical partners) confirmed that they receive copies of the policies relevant to their work and scope.
- The Preparation Administration of Examinations & Assessments document provides a framework for standardising assessment methods and ensures their quality. The document details the processes of examination papers preparation, internal examination reviews, administration of examination papers, marking and moderating, and releasing of examination results. The Panel notes that course descriptors include varied formative and summative assessment methods. Formative and summative assessment methods are used in almost all courses, with the greatest weight assigned to summative assessment

methods. The Mark and Standards document includes a breakdown of all assessment methods.

- During the virtual site visit interviews, external examiners confirmed that they review the marks and standards annually. Course coordinators confirmed that they review their course assessment strategies in the context of student and external examiner feedback before the beginning of each academic year. During the interviews, the faculty reported that marking criteria are constructed based on the types of assessment. For questions that require written responses, model answers are created. Formal scoresheets are used to grade students' clinical and practice performance. Clinical Tutors confirmed that they use Student Clinical Academic Records (SCARs) to evaluate students' ongoing clinical performance.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, the faculty mentioned that they provide feedback to students based on the types of assessment. The Panel notes that the feedback in the provided sample of written assignment feedback is comprehensive and constructive. Most students reported, during the interviews, that the feedback they receive on their written assignments is generic and not personalized. The Panel advises the programme team to have a dialogue with the students about the assessment feedback. The Panel suggests that the programme develop assessment feedback guidelines with objective expectations. The Panel also advises the programme team to provide regular feedback on multiple-choice and short-answer questions instead of only providing feedback in exceptional circumstances, as stated in the SER.
- The BSc. N programme includes an introductory course (Research & Evidence-Based Nursing N208) on research and EBP nursing. The course introduces students to the principles of scientific research and evidence-based nursing practice, which also intends to engage and raise students' interest in the research arena. Some of the course objectives and contents focus on the principles underpinning ethically sound research activities.
- Based on the interviews with students, faculty, moderators, and external examiners, the Panel notes that student performance is graded fairly and rigorously. The Panel also notes that the provisions for selecting moderators, the moderation procedures, and the reporting of moderation results are appropriate and ensure consistent and fair practice. The Panel appreciates the programme for having clear, standardised, and systematic procedures for grading and moderation.
- The Panel notes that academic integrity and misconduct at RCSI-MUB are mainly regulated by RCSI-MUB Plagiarism Policy. The policy details the definitions of plagiarism, student responsibility, university responsibility, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism. The plagiarism policy also includes provisions and mechanisms for preventing and managing misconduct. The regulations outline the process of managing first-time and repeated academic misconduct. Based on the seriousness of the misconduct,

the issue can be resolved at the programme level or may be escalated to the University-level authorities. In addition to the policy, the students must also abide by the RCSI-MUB Student Code of Conduct.

- The RCSI-MUB Appeal Regulations outline the procedures for students on how to appeal decisions affecting their progression (e.g., grades, disciplinary actions), when (timeline), and to whom to appeal. The procedures also detail the formation and role of the Appeal Committee, and the role of Student Welfare Officers and the Student, Academic & Regulatory Affairs (SARA). The regulations explain how appeals are processed, how decisions are made, and how they are communicated to the students. Students can appeal the decision of the Appeal Committee under the Independent Appeals Commissioner process. The Student Complaints Policy is the main reference for student complaints and grievances.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The admission policy of the programme clearly outlines the guidelines, procedures, and requirements of admission to the BSc. N programme. The policy is available on the University website. The required academic standing and language proficiency scores are clearly stated. Sponsoring employers confirmed that they receive copies of the criteria and requirements. Based on the interviews with relevant parties, the Panel notes that there is a standardized admission process that treats applicants equally regardless of their gender or sponsorship. According to the policy on appeal against admission decision, applicants, who are rejected for not meeting the admission requirements, have the right to appeal the decision.
- The Panel notes that the admission requirements are appropriate for a bachelor-level nursing programme. The requirements are justified and comparable to similar international programmes. The admission requirements include qualifications and attributes that candidates should have to be successful in the programme. The required English proficiency score is justified and consistent with similar regional and international programmes.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel was informed that the lack of English language proficiency is the most common challenge for students to enter and progress in the programme. To support student progress, an additional online English language programme is offered for students in Years 1 and 2. The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB offers several services that support student success, including the Buddy System, academic advising and life coaching by personal tutors, and the CSS.

- RCSI-MUB has a policy for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which regulates the process of accepting RPL for the purpose of admission to relevant programmes, exemption from similar courses, and advancing entry into a programme of study. According to the policy, each programme may specify RPL criteria and publish them in the relevant course application material. The Panel notes that RCSI does not accept transfer students and during the virtual site visit the Panel attempted to clarify the justification of not accepting transfer students. However, no justification was provided. The Panel is of the view that such practice may prevent qualified candidates from joining the programme. Hence, the Panel advises the School to examine this practice.
- During the virtual site visit interviews with relevant parties, the Panel clarified and verified that the admission requirements are reviewed annually by the Admission Committee and revised as needed. For this purpose, the Admission Committee uses results of admission targets, student progress, market needs and stakeholders' feedback. The Panel notes that the admission criteria are similar to those used in regional and international programmes.

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.

Judgment: Partially Addressed

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has a recruitment and selection policy that details the recruitment and hiring procedures, including advertising, screening, shortlisting, interviewing, qualification verifying, and appointing. RCSI-MUB confirmed that all vacant positions are advertised, so potential candidates have equal opportunities to apply. The Panel notes that the induction policy is detailed, including procedures that extend from the time the employee signs the offer letter until the end of the induction. Recently hired staff members confirmed and appreciated the orientation programmes at the university and school levels for providing helpful information about the country, university, and the programme.
- The Head of School and faculty confirmed that their performance is appraised annually according to the RCSI-MUB general competency framework, using the Professional Development Planning form. The Panel notes that the form is aligned with RCSI's general competency framework. However, the Panel suggests that the form ought to be revised to include objective measurements and indicators (e.g., student evaluation of faculty and courses, list of publications, awards, local and national services, etc.).

- RCSI-MUB has a policy that regulates academic promotion. Promotion is decided based on the staff's performance in teaching, research, and community engagement. The promotion requirements and procedures are clear and justified. However, only one academic staff member has been promoted since 2014. The Panel recommends that the programme should develop strategies to encourage and support faculty to meet the promotion requirements. The Panel also advises the University to review its current promotion policy and practices to give RCSI-MUB and SONM a role in the promotion instead of having the promotion review and decision be made exclusively by RCSI Dublin.
- There are no specific policies or procedures that regulate or specify the quantity or quality of research output by faculty teaching in the BSc. N programme. The data provided regarding the research output reflect RCSI-MUB as an institution but not the programme or SONM. The operational plan of SONM includes goals and KPIs for research. However, based on the provided data, the research productivity and output do not meet the KPIs of RCSI. The Panel recommends that the SONM should develop clear strategic goals for the research pillar with specific strategies, actions, and KPIs to enhance the scholarship productivity and research output by faculty.
- Based on the virtual site visit interviews with the human resources, programme management, and faculty, the Panel notes that there is no specific model or a clear way for calculating staff workload. The faculty reported that their teaching load is not standardized or consistent. Since academic staff are evaluated and promoted based on their teaching, research, and services, the Panel recommends that RCSI-MUB should develop clear guidelines for calculating the workload in the three areas and provide sufficient time for conducting scholarship activities.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, female staff confirmed that they receive additional support such as maternity leave, rooms for breastfeeding and childcare, flexible working hours, among others. Special needs of female employees are accommodated. During the interviews, female employees confirmed that support and accommodations are provided to meet their special needs during pregnancy and other gender-related needs. The Panel appreciates the support provided for working women which has enabled RCSI-MUB to win the second place in the sixth edition of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Award for Advancement of Bahraini Women under the private institution's category in 2020.
- The programme utilises full-time and part-time faculty with an appropriate range of qualifications. Currently, there are (11) full-time faculty who are assigned to teaching. The Panel notes that some specialisations (e.g., critical care, women health) were not specified in the faculty profiles. Of the (11) full-time nursing faculty, only three have specific nursing specializations. Most faculty members have 'general nursing' as their specialty. The Panel

recommends that the SONM should create a recruitment plan based on the needed specialisations and ensure that teaching is assigned based on staff specialisations.

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has policies that govern creating and funding professional development opportunities' Professional Development Unit (PDU) operates professional development functions, including funding for advanced degrees, presentations at conferences, and training and short courses. The programme employs appropriate methods to identify the needs of faculty for professional development. There are current professional development initiatives for academic staff, such as LinkedIn learning and the academic development framework. Currently, staff satisfaction after each professional development event is measured but there is no standardized way or a system to evaluate the long-term effects of professional development initiatives and activities on staff performance. The Panel advises RCSI-MUB and the SONM to develop a systematic plan to evaluate the long-term effects of professional development opportunities.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, faculty members mentioned that RCSI-MUB and SONM employ several strategies to support the welfare of staff. Examples mentioned include recognition awards and funding for various professional development activities. According to the programme managers and faculty, faculty turnover has not been an issue.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes from the site visit virtual tour and evidences that, considering the number of students admitted to the BSc. N programme and based on the number and capacities of the available space, there is sufficient space for students in the classrooms and laboratories. The Panel appreciates RCSI-MUB for its spacious, state-of-the-art-equipped classrooms and laboratories displayed in the virtual site visit tour. Non-nursing laboratories are also available.
- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has updated Information Technology (IT) infrastructure that is utilised to support the BSc. N programme. The SER includes a detailed description of the campus IT infrastructure, equipment, and technical support, which was clarified and verified during the virtual site visit interviews. Based on the feedback from the BSc. N students and faculty during the interviews, the Panel acknowledges that the available technologies and IT support meet the learning needs of students.

- The library and its resources are well described in the SER. Based on the interviews with the librarians, faculty, and students, the Panel notes that the study space, resources, e-resources, human resources, and working hours of the library are sufficient to meet the BSc. N students' needs.
- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has a Health, Safety, Environmental, and Quality (HSEQ) system that meets international standards. According to the RCSI-HSEQ manual, resources, equipment, safety tools, and facilities are regularly checked for safety and effectiveness. RCSI-MUB also has a crisis plan that manages various scenarios that may negatively affect campus life.
- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB and the BSc. N programme have appropriate arrangements and measures to protect the health and maintain the safety of staff and students. The HSEQ team manages the general maintenance and safety of RCSI-MUB campus according to the HSEQ manual. The SONM and BSc. N faculty are involved and represented in RCSI-MUB Health and Safety Committee. For the BSc. N students specifically, there is a clear and specific policy for general health, infectious diseases screening, and vaccination. Faculty and students confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews that safety measures are regularly followed, especially in the laboratories and that safety measures have intensified since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The virtual site visit tour displayed no safety concerns.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- Based on the visual demonstration presented during the virtual site visit, the Panel notes that two Management Information Systems (MIS) are supporting the BSc. N programme: the Quercus system, which manages the educational data and records of the BSc. N programme, and the Quality Management System (QMS), which manages the quality assurance data. Each system has several functions and can generate various reports upon request. The demonstration of both systems showed that they contain a significant resource of data that informs the decision-making in the programme. Access to the data is secure based on the user's responsibilities and privileges.
- The BSc. N programme employs various ways to track, monitor, and report the utilisation of resources (e.g., e-learning and libraries). For example, the utilisation of the Internet bandwidth was monitored and reported. It was verified during the virtual site visit

interviews with IT support staff members that virtual systems and software are monitored regularly for new editions and upgraded as needed. Students reported no issues with the availability and convenience of resources or e-resources.

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has a policy that governs the security and confidentiality of students' records. The policy details procedures for entering, updating, and amending students' records and grades. Access to students' records is password-protected and is limited to those whose roles require viewing students' records.

Based on the awarded certificate samples, the Panel notes that the certificates include the accurate title and credentials of the qualification. The BSc. N programme graduates receive their certificates upon completing the programme requirements. The dates stated on the certificates indicate that they are issued in a timely manner. During the virtual site visit interviews, students confirmed that they can view and print their unofficial transcripts anytime through their secured Student Gateway. If they need official transcripts, students can request them, at any time, from SARA. Students also reported late issuance of certificates. Faculty members clarified that the certificates are issued in a timely manner; however, the HEC endorsement of certificates takes a long time in some cases.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- Based on the interviews with students and support services, the Panel notes that student support at RCSI-MUB begins with an orientation upon admission and continues until graduation. Academic and non-academic support services are available for students based on their level (e.g., personal tutors, buddies, and pathway programme for newcomers) and circumstances (e.g., counselling). The library offers valuable resources and e-resources that are accessed on and off-campus. The library serves as a learning center. The Library & Learning Resource Centre (LLRC) has eleven group study rooms; it is open for over 100 hours per week; and provides access to several electronic journal databases. The LLRC staff assist students in finding resources for learning and research. Additional services were added in response to COVID-19 impact.
- In one of the virtual site visit interviews, some alumni reported that they received no career guidance during their time at RCSI-MUB. In a call-back meeting with Careers and Alumni Offices, the Panel was informed that career counselling and guidance are offered to all RCSI-MUB students regardless of their status. Examples of career guidance services

include regular events and workshops on CV development, licensure, and employment. The Panel advises RCSI-MUB to ensure that career guidance is provided to all students.

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB provides a comprehensive orientation programme and an informative orientation handbook to its newcomers. The Panel notes that the Orientation Handbook is comprehensive and provides helpful information. During the virtual site visit interviews, the students expressed appreciation for the orientation programme for having introduced them to various aspects of the student and campus life. Students explained that they benefited from the various services and resources offered at RCSI-MUB such as the Buddy Programme, Learning Communities, and Personal Tutor. The Panel appreciates that RCSI-MUB has multiple programmes and services that help students adjust to university life, especially the Buddy Programme for its well-designed student-centered activities, ongoing evaluation, and informative materials.
- Based on the interviews with faculty and students, the Panel notes that academic guidance is provided by course coordinators during office hours. As per the SER, SARA coordinators also provide advising to students on academic requirements and provide working solutions to students' queries. However, based on their job description academic advising is not one of the SARA coordinators' responsibilities. The Panel recommends that the RCSI-MUB should develop clear guidelines for academic advising and assign the responsibility to qualified academics who teach in the programme.
- RCSI-MUB has a specific policy that guides and advises female students who become pregnant. Occupational Health Officers from the Student Health and Wellbeing unit provide guidance and support to pregnant students. During the virtual site visit interviews, female students and faculty confirmed that support and accommodations are provided to pregnant students. The Panel notes no concerns regarding gender equality or discrimination.
- RCSI-MUB has a specific policy that includes guidelines and procedures on accommodating students with disabilities. The Panel notes that the accommodations and adjustments for students with special needs and disabilities are reasonable and can support student success. The programme has no records of students with special needs or disabilities.
- The Panel notes that the programme has mechanisms to monitor, identify, and support students at risk of academic failure. Course coordinators and Level Directors continuously monitor their students' attendance, performance, and progress to identify those who struggle academically. Based on the issues that at-risk students face, students are referred to the CSS for academic tutoring and support or to the Student Development and Wellbeing for counselling. During the virtual site visit interviews, students confirmed that students who struggle academically receive help from their faculty, academic advisors, and the CSS. Faculty and students indicated that the CSS assesses and analyses the

learning needs of struggling students and develops remedial support plans for them accordingly. The students report back regularly to the CSS, and their progress is further monitored.

- The Panel notes that support services and resources provided by RCSI-MUB are regularly evaluated by the students and satisfaction reports are generated. Identified issues and complaints are referred to the appropriate parties. For example, students had reported that they needed more space in the library for studying and learning. After analyzing the feedback, RCSI-MUB redesigned and expanded the capacity of the library to over 300 students.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The BSc. N programme courses utilise varied methods for formative and summative assessment. The types and levels of complexity of assessment methods align with the course levels and CILOs. The Panel notes that the programme has standardised procedures of assignment marking, moderation, entering and rechecking marks, completing students' feedback, and publishing results. The Panel acknowledges that the BSc. N programme courses utilise assessment methods consistent with RCSI-MUB relevant policies and established academic standards and best practices.
- The Panel notes that the BSc. N programme has detailed procedures for preparing, administering, and marking various assessment methods. These procedures include verifying the alignment of assessment methods with the CILOs and course assessment blueprints that map the PILOs, CILOs, and assessment methods. This mapping, along with the assessment validity verification, support the graduates' achievement of the PILOs.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, students demonstrated an understanding of the PILOs and acknowledged that the examinations and assignments are generally fair, transparent, and within their expectations. Upon reviewing some evaluation samples and moderation reports, the Panel found the evaluation methods appropriate in terms of alignment with learning outcomes and with course levels.
- There are mechanisms in place for monitoring and improving the assessments. These mechanisms include following consistent and standard procedures for assessment preparation, administration, marking, and moderation. Assessments are reviewed internally and externally before and after assessment administration. The Panel appreciates that the programme has multiple mechanisms by which the quality of assessment methods' is assessed and improved as needed.

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).

Judgment: Addressed

- RCSI-MUB has a Student Code of Conduct. The code includes a set of professional and ethical standards, including academic integrity. Every student at RCSI-MUB must read, sign, and agree to abide by the code. Also, RCSI-MUB has a university-wide plagiarism policy that includes rules and guidelines for preventing and handling academic integrity violations. At the programme level, the BSc. N students receive the Student Clinical Handbook, which regulates professionalism and integrity during clinical training. The policies and codes are available on the VLE. Students are informed of the academic integrity rules and regulations upon admission and are regularly reminded and requested to sign the RCSI-MUB code of conduct. In addition, RCSI-MUB has a Research Ethics Committee that reviews research proposals submitted by faculty or students to ensure that they meet established ethical standards.
- To deter plagiarism, RCSI-MUB provides students with access to the plagiarism detection software (Turnitin). At the programme level, students are required to submit all written assignments *via* Turnitin and to have final submissions with a similarity index below 20%. During the virtual site visit interviews, students confirmed that they had completed the RCSI-MUB online plagiarism course in their first year. The students appreciated the course for helping them understand the types of plagiarism and how to avoid them. The Panel appreciates that RCSI-MUB does not only disseminate the plagiarism policy and student code of conduct on its VLE but also requires students to complete an online course on academic integrity.
- Based on the provided samples of misconduct cases, the Panel notes that cases of academic misconduct and integrity violations are reported, investigated, and recorded appropriately. However, the Panel found that in one case, the applied sanction does not seem to be appropriate, considering the seriousness or the frequency of the misconduct. Although, it was not the student's first misconduct, the penalty was a warning only. The Panel advises the SONM and SARA to audit the misconduct cases and applied sanctions.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that there are appropriate internal moderation procedures. The internal moderation process involves course coordinators, internal moderators, markers, and SARA coordinators. The responsibilities of parties involved in the internal moderation process are stated clearly. SARA coordinators facilitate the internal moderation process and liaise between the course coordinators and internal moderators. Appropriate forms are used to communicate the moderation feedback. The provided marking and moderation schedule sample shows a well-organised process with ample timing for marking and moderation. During the virtual site visit interviews, faculty members clarified that the experience and load are considered when internal moderators are selected. The marking and moderation schedule sample shows that all faculty teaching on the BSc. N programme serve as internal moderators.
- Upon reviewing the provided evidence and based on the interviews with the faculty, the Panel notes that the consistent application of the internal moderation ensures consistent assessments and fairness of grading. The provided evidence shows that when grades are changed, justifications are provided. Furthermore, upon reviewing samples of MMRs, the Panel notes that the findings and feedback of internal moderation are included in the MMRs and utilised to assure and improve the programme's quality. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the BSc. N internal moderation process and procedures are comparable to similar international programmes and meet established moderation standards.
- The Panel notes that there are at least two mechanisms where internal moderation is discussed. First, upon completing the moderation, internal moderators, course coordinators, and markers meet and discuss and reflect on the findings and recommendations of the internal moderation. Second, the external moderators provide general comments on the internal moderation to improve the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation processes.
- There are appropriate external moderation procedures. The external moderation process involves course coordinators, external examiners (moderators), markers, and SARA coordinators. Assessment moderation is one of the duties that appointed external examiners are assigned to do. The responsibilities of parties involved in the external moderation process are stated clearly. SARA coordinators facilitate the external moderation process and liaise between the course coordinators and external examiners. Appropriate forms are used to communicate the moderation feedback. The external examiners' reports include detailed feedback on the assessment preparation, administration, and results. External examiners are appointed following the NUI policy on external examiners. The policy includes the roles, responsibilities, and the selection criteria of the external examiners. Based on the virtual site visit interview with external

examiners (moderators), the Panel notes that the current examiners are highly qualified and meet the stated selection criteria.

- Upon reviewing samples of external examiners' reports and based on the meeting with the faculty, the Panel notes that the feedback from the external examiners supports the consistency of assessments and fairness of grading. The BSc. N external moderation processes of selection and reporting are comparable to similar international programmes and meet established standards. Furthermore, upon reviewing samples of MMRs and annual programme analysis reports, the Panel notes that the findings and feedback of external moderation are included in the MMRs and APA, and action plans are formed based on the external examiners' reports.
- The Panel notes that the external moderation is not formally evaluated. The NUI policy on external examiners does not include procedures for evaluating external examiners' reports. The Panel recommends that the SONM should formally and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the external examiners' reports and share the evaluation with NUI to inform their decision on the current and future external examiner selection.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that there is no specific policy for clinical affairs. However, there are procedures in place that regulate and facilitate clinical placement. RCSI-MUB has several Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and affiliation agreements with clinical training settings that provide primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare. These arrangements secure clinical experiences that students need at different levels during their study. The signed agreements stipulate the roles and responsibilities of all involved parties before, during, and after clinical training. The Panel appreciates that the programme has efficient and effective arrangements for clinical placement. The Programme Director chairs the Clinical Teaching and Learning Committee, which includes faculty and administrative staff from the SONM, and representatives from all clinical sites. The programme employs a Clinical Placement Coordinator (CPC) who liaises with all parties involved in clinical placement. During the virtual site visit interviews, the representatives of the affiliated clinical sites commended the programme's communication and adherence to the agreements. The programme keeps records of current MoUs and agreements. The Panel appreciates that the newly utilised clinical sites are evaluated by SONM to ensure that

these sites are safe and offer clinical experiences that meet the learning needs of the BSc. N students at different levels.

- The Student Clinical Handbook details the roles and responsibilities of clinical mentors and clinical tutors toward students and the programme. The Handbook also describes the students' rights, roles, and responsibilities and the professional and ethical standards they must adhere to. Students receive copies of the Student Clinical Handbook. During the virtual site visit interviews, the clinical tutors and clinical mentors confirmed that they receive the students' clinical learning outcomes every semester and that the programme holds clinical teaching workshops to orient clinical tutors and clinical mentors on their roles and responsibilities.
- Based on the clinical course descriptors, the Panel notes that the number of required clinical hours, the clinical activities, the utilised clinical units, and the tutor-to-student ratios are appropriate for the achievement of the required ILOs. During the virtual site visit interviews, the faculty and students expressed appreciation for the clinical learning experiences for having met their learning needs.
- There is an ongoing, formative assessment of student performance conducted by the clinical tutors throughout the clinical posting and a final summative evaluation using a standardised format. The course coordinators are also involved in the assessment process through debriefing sessions conducted at the beginning, halfway, and the end of the posting. The students confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews that they receive constructive, personalised feedback that helps them improve. Based on the clinical course descriptors and the interviews with faculty, students, and clinical tutors, the Panel appreciates the programme for its organised, consistent, and valid clinical evaluation process.
- The programme has taken some measures to select suitable clinical sites and qualified clinical tutors and mentors. However, in addition to the debriefing sessions, there is a need for regular anonymous evaluation of the clinical sites, clinical tutors, or clinical experiences to be done by the students. The Panel recommends that the School should develop standard forms to evaluate clinical sites, mentors and clinical tutors, and to utilise the evaluation findings to maintain or improve the students' clinical learning experiences.

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.

Judgment: *Partially Addressed*

- The programme curriculum does not include a thesis or capstone project. In the SER, the programme presents the 'Consolidated Clinical Practise' (N406) course as a graduation project. However, based on the course description, aim, details, components, and assignments, the Panel notes that the N406 course's focus is mainly to facilitate a student's role transition to an entry-level nurse. The N406 course is aligned with (16) clinical-based competencies (knowledge and skills) and (2) evidence-based competencies. In N406, students spend the great majority of the course assigned hours in clinical posting. The Panel notes that N406 includes a literature review and poster presentation assignments. However, the assignments do not constitute a culminating project. The Panel notes that a similar assignment is required in the 'Research and Evidence-Based Nursing'(N208R) course. Hence, the Panel recommends that the programme should either add a new capstone course or revise N406 to include a culminating, multifaceted project that can clearly and effectively contribute to the achievement of the PILOs.
- The Panel notes that in the N406 course, students are assigned to supervisors who present lectures on the literature review and analysis and guide the students in completing the assignment. The programme's Assessment and Examination Guidelines include clear and detailed instructions for the literature review and poster assignments. The Panel recommends that upon the addition of a culminating, multifaceted graduation project, the programme should describe in detail specific roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders (namely, supervisors and students).
- Like other courses, N406 is evaluated by students and monitored by the course coordinator. The students' feedback is used to propose improvement plans. The students' input in the MMR of N406 indicates that they find it challenging to work on the assignment while doing shift duties. The Panel advises the programme to consider the students' feedback when deciding to revise the existing N406 course or add a new one, and to include mechanisms for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the student supervision process.
- The literature review and poster presentation are treated as regular assignments. The current evaluation criteria are appropriate. The Panel advises, however, that the programme develop more rigorous assessment criteria when deciding to revise the existing course or adding a new one as a full-fledged capstone course.
- The Panel notes that the N406 course is regularly monitored for ongoing improvement. The MMRs include course improvement plans, proposed actions, responsible party, and timeframe for completion. The MMR is submitted to the Programme Director and Head of School to be discussed in the subsequent academic committee meeting.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The Panel notes that the overall students' achievements are appropriate, reasonable, and consistent with similar programmes. The programme employs careful and critical assessments of students' works that are regularly moderated internally and externally. Based on the courses' blueprints of assessment, the Panel notes that the assessment methods, frequency, and complexity are appropriate for the courses' outcomes, level, type, and credits. The Panel suggests that the programme add PILOs for creation and innovation levels. These PILOs can be suitable for a capstone or graduation project course, when introduced.
- Based on the interviews, the Panel notes that data on student progression (e.g., admission, attrition, completion rates) is tracked and monitored by the Careers and Alumni Customer Relations Management (CRM). A demonstration of the data collection system was presented to the Panel, during the virtual site visit. The Panel noticed that data such as employment rate and employment posts is not collected. The Panel advises the SONM to develop, track, and monitor a KPI for employment rate (e.g., number of graduates hired as nurses within six months of graduation). The Panel also noticed that some of the collated data are not shared or considered by the programme. The Panel advises that the programme team to regularly obtain all relevant data, including that on graduate destinations, collected by the CRM and utilize it to inform its decisions.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, the employers commended the programme for equipping the graduates with the needed competencies. The employers reported that they were satisfied with RCSI's BSc. N programme graduates. The employers' feedback was consistent with the employers' satisfaction results obtained recently. Also, alumni who attended the interviews were overall satisfied with the programme.

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.

Judgment: *Addressed*

- RCSI-MUB has institutional policies and regulations that meet the needs and govern the functions of the BSc. N programme. There are policies for students, faculty, Quality Assurance (QA), safety and maintenance, and certification. Based on the virtual site visit interviews and submitted evidence, the Panel was able to confirm that the policies and procedures are consistently implemented. The policies are regularly reviewed and updated, as evidenced by the dates stated on the policies' front pages. The policies are available on the VLE and accessible by internal stakeholders (students and academic and administrative staff). During the interviews, the Panel verified that regulations' updates are communicated promptly to stakeholders. External stakeholders who attended the interviews confirmed that the programme shared with them policies relevant to their work.
- RCSI-MUB has a clear organisational structure of quality assessment and enhancement that specifies the roles and responsibilities of the QEC and the Quality Monitoring Committee (QMC). There is a specific QA policy and a detailed handbook for quality enhancement. The Panel notes that the QA Handbook details several QA procedures (e.g., QA cycles, self-assessment, documentation, involvement of stakeholders). During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel verified that those involved in QA at RCSI-MUB and the BSc. N programme follow the procedures detailed in the QA Handbook. The Head of Quality Enhancement Office and the programme representatives in the Quality Monitoring Sub-Committee clarified their roles and communication channels.
- RCSI-MUB has implemented strategies to ensure consistent application of policies and procedures across schools and departments. During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel verified that faculty, students, and staff have access to the policies, procedures, and manuals *via* their VLE accounts. Also, the QEC includes representatives from all departments and units, which keeps all parties informed and ensures consistent

understanding and application of policies and regulations. Based on the PAB interview, the Panel notes that the PAB plays a significant role in ensuring a uniform application of such policies and regulations, since it receives reports from academics, students, and staff. Another mechanism is that of forming the Operations Management Group, which includes representatives from all departments, units, and schools.

- During the virtual site visit interviews, faculty and staff confirmed that they consistently follow the procedures detailed in the QA Handbook. The Panel notes that faculty and staff are aware of their specific roles and responsibilities toward the QA of the BSc. N programme. The Panel verified that faculty members contribute toward QA through activities such as course monitoring, marks and standards, and end-of-semester reports, among others. Based on the interviews with supporting staff members from various units, the Panel notes that there is ongoing communication between these units and the programme, to exchange data and feedback to improve the programme's quality.
- Based on the visual demonstration of the QMS and the interviews that were conducted during the virtual site visit, the Panel notes that the QMS provides valuable data and reports that inform the BSc. N. programme's decisions. The Panel appreciates that RCSI-MUB has a comprehensive and systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting QMS that can generate helpful reports to inform the programme's decisions.
- The Panel notes that the QA system at RCSI-MUB has been reviewed internally through a peer-review and self-assessment process and externally through institutional accreditation. During several interviews, the Panel verified that feedback and inputs from various stakeholders are systematically collected, analysed, and reported. The QMS is also flexible and can adopt additional functions, if needed.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The SER describes the programme management structure and the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the management. Based on the interviews with the management team, the Panel notes that the roles, responsibilities, and authority of the Interim Head of SONM, the Director of the BSc. N programme, Level Directors, and Module/Course Coordinators are clear and appropriate.
- Based on provided job descriptions, minutes of meetings and the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel notes that there are clear lines of communication and reporting in all academic and administrative affairs of the programme. There are also clear reporting

procedures of course monitoring, internal and external moderation, external examiners, clinical reports, and PAB reports.

- Based on the review of several committees' terms of references and the job description of posts, the Panel acknowledges that RCSI-MUB has clear and updated terms of reference and job descriptions.
- The Panel notes that there is a clear assignment of academic responsibilities in the programme. The Head of SONM has overall responsibility for the nursing programme and is supported by the Programme Director. There is also a clear assignment of teaching, marking, and moderation, in line with national, international, and professional academic standards.
- Based on the programme outcomes and feedback of internal and external stakeholders during the interview sessions, the Panel notes that the leadership model of the programme is effective and responsible. The roles and responsibilities and lines of communication between the Head of School, Programme Directors, Module Coordinators, and external stakeholders are clear.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- RCSI-MUB has clear and detailed procedures for internal and external reviews of programmes and courses. During the virtual site visit interviews, course coordinators confirmed that they review and report on their courses every fall and spring semester. The Programme Director analyses and reports on the BSc. N programme annually in December and the Heads of the SONM report on the quality assurance and enhancement of the programmes annually in February. The process of data collection, analysis, and reporting is detailed in the SER. The Panel notes that the MMR and APA reports include qualitative and quantitative data gathered from students, faculty, and external examiners. The MMR and APA samples also include areas in need of development and suggested improvement plans based on the collected data.
- The Panel notes that the review reports include Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) with specific objectives, proposed actions, responsibilities, and timeframes for completion. In the following cycle of reviews, responsible parties monitor and report on the identified QIPs. The SER includes some examples of changes and improvements made based on gathered feedback from stakeholders. During interviews, faculty and the programme

management team shared additional examples where the collected feedback from stakeholders informed some decisions (e.g., revising the curriculum sequence).

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has a policy that governs the monitoring and periodic review of curricula, programmes, and awards with detailed procedural guidelines for programme review. As per the policy, academic programmes offered at RCSI-MUB are regularly reviewed to ensure they are fit for purpose and award. The QEC oversees and schedules the periodic reviews of programmes every five to seven years.
- The periodic review at RCSI-MUB is a systematic process that begins with developing a self-assessment committee that prepares a draft SER. The next step is forming a peer-review group of national and international external experts to conduct a site visit and write a report with recommendations for improvement. Following that, QIPs are developed from the review report's recommendations. Finally, the implementation of QIPs is monitored, and reports are generated accordingly. The process ensures the participation of internal and external stakeholders. During the virtual site visit interviews, students, faculty, staff, alumni, employers, external moderators, and representatives of affiliated hospitals confirmed that their feedback and inputs are collected regularly for QA purposes. The Panel appreciates that RCSI-MUB has a comprehensive periodic review process detailed in the Quality Handbook.
- As noted earlier, QIPs are identified from the reports of periodic reviews. QIPs have specific objectives, proposed actions, responsibilities, and timeframes for completion. The Panel notes the introduction of the automated QMS that RCSI-MUB uses to monitor and track QIPs based on surveyed data and reviews of programmes.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The SER refers to some benchmarking, including the NQF, the Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI), the NUI, and the World Health Organization (WHO), and relevant GCC standards. The provided evidence indicates that in 2018, a peer review group was formed to conduct an internal review of the programme that included benchmarking against international nursing standards. The group reported the results of the review, which included a number of commendations and recommendations. The Panel notes that benchmarking was carried out recently against similar Nursing programmes in 2021. It was conducted across several pre-determined criteria which

include teaching, learning and assessment. The Panel recommends that the SONM should extend the scope of benchmarking to include admission criteria, graduate attributes, faculty-to-student ratio, faculty qualifications, graduation projects and programme completion rates.

- The Panel notes that the programme utilizes various mechanisms to gather structured subjective and objective data from its stakeholders. These mechanisms include regular reports such as MMRs, APAs, external examiner reports, end-of-semester evaluation surveys, and alumni and employer surveys. In addition, comments are collected during the stakeholder's engagement day and regular meetings (e.g., PAB, steering joint committees).
- The stakeholders confirmed during the interviews that their feedback is collected in the form of written qualitative comments as part of surveys and also verbally during the meetings. The Programme Director and QA staff confirm that the collected comments are analysed, and some are included in the QIPs. The Panel suggests that the collected comments be included in the QMS.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, students, faculty, and representatives of the affiliated hospitals expressed appreciation toward the communication and updates they regularly receive from RCSI-MUB, which include general updates and news about RCSI-MUB as well as specific information relevant to their relationship with RCSI. Students expressed their satisfaction with how the programme handles their feedback and the programme's changes based on their feedback. Similarly, representatives of the affiliated hospitals expressed their appreciation of being informed and updated by the programme. However, some alumni indicated that they received no regular communication or updates from the programme. The Panel, therefore, advises that the programme improve its connection and communication with the alumni.

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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The BSc. N programme has a functioning PAB with clear terms of reference. The PAB includes the programme management team, faculty representative, and student representative. Also, the PAB consists of representatives from the affiliated hospitals and experts in nursing practise. The Panel suggests that experts in graduate nursing education, national, regional, or international, be invited as members of the PAB.

- The Panel notes that the PAB plays a major role in supporting the programme and assuring its quality. The PAB receives all forms of data the programme collects, and meets once a semester to advise the programme on identified QIPs and new initiatives. The Panel acknowledges the role of the PAB and encourages the programme to continue with this best practice.
- The programme has implemented several mechanisms to keep abreast with the market needs and maintain student recruitment. Examples of these mechanisms include conducting the 2018-2019 market insights study and maintaining excellent relationships with partners in the healthcare sectors.
- The Panel notes that in 2019, RCSI-MUB conducted a market analysis that included 923 respondents. The study aimed to identify the current and emerging needs of the market. The study provided several insights that could inform the programme's decision-making. For example, educational facilities remain the number one factor for nursing students in selecting a school, and the international environment was a key driver in selecting RCSI-MUB.
- The programme maintains ongoing communication with its stakeholders in the market and continuously evaluates the meeting of the needs and expectations of employers. In addition, the Panel was informed during the virtual site visit interviews that the Marketing and Communication department is currently developing the University's scheduled marketing insight study for this year.

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 Nursing of School of Nursing and Midwifery offered by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland-Medical University of Bahrain.

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

1. The good practices that the BSc. N programme follows to keep stakeholders involved, such as the steering committees with the Ministry of Health, the Joint Board for RCSI-MUB and Private Hospitals Collaboration, and the Advisory Board membership, student representation in the Quality Enhancement Committee, the roles and functions of the Programme Advisory Board and the Clinical Teaching & Learning Committee stakeholders.
2. The various informal and non-formal learning activities that RCSI-MUB and the BSc. N programme provide.
3. The availability of clear, standardised, and systematic procedures for grading and moderation.
4. The support provided for working women which has enabled RCSI-MUB to win the second place in the sixth edition of her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa Award for Advancement of Bahraini Women under the private institution's category in 2020.
5. The spacious, state-of-the-art-equipped classrooms and laboratories displayed in the virtual site visit tour of RCSI-MUB.
6. The multiple programmes and services that help students adjust to university life, especially the Buddy Programme for its well-designed student-centered activities, ongoing evaluation, and informative materials.
7. The multiple mechanisms by which the quality of the BSc. N programme's assessment methods is assessed and improved as needed.
8. The online course on academic integrity that students are required to complete, in addition to the dissemination of the plagiarism policy and student code of conduct on RCSI-MUB Virtual Learning Environment.

9. The efficient and effective arrangement of clinical placement and the evaluation of newly utilised clinical sites by the School of Nursing & Midwifery to ensure that these sites are safe and offer clinical experiences that meet the learning needs of the BSc. N students at different levels.
10. The organised, consistent, and valid clinical evaluation process of the BSc. N programme.
11. The comprehensive and systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting Quality Management System that can generate helpful reports to inform the programme's decisions.
12. The clear and updated terms of reference and job descriptions.
13. The comprehensive periodic review process detailed in the Quality Handbook.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that RCSI-MUB and/or SONM, should:

1. Create a clear and detailed risk register that includes risk rating, mitigation actions, and management tools.
2. Benchmark the BSc. N programme's intended learning outcomes against similar regional and local programmes, where applicable.
3. Review the course descriptors to ensure that all courses have specific and current required and recommended learning material.
4. Develop strategies to encourage and support faculty to meet the promotion requirements.
5. Develop clear strategic goals for the research pillar with specific strategies, actions, and Key Performance Indicators to enhance the scholarship productivity and research output by faculty.
6. Develop clear guidelines for calculating the workload in teaching, research, and services, and provide sufficient time for conducting scholarship activities.
7. Create a recruitment plan based on the needed specialisations and ensure that teaching is assigned based on staff specialisations.
8. Develop clear guidelines for academic advising and assign the responsibility to qualified academics who teach in the programme.
9. Evaluate the effectiveness of the external examiners' reports formally and regularly and share the evaluation with National University of Ireland to inform their decision on the current and future external examiner selection.
10. Develop standard forms to evaluate clinical sites, mentors and clinical tutors and utilise the evaluation findings to maintain or improve the students' clinical learning experiences.

11. Add a new capstone course or revise the 'Consolidated Clinical Practise' (N406) course to include a culminating, multifaceted project that can clearly and effectively contribute to the achievement of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes.
12. Describe, in detail, specific roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders (namely, supervisors and students), upon the addition of a culminating, multifaceted graduation project.
13. Extend the scope of benchmarking to include admission criteria, graduate attributes, faculty-to-student ratio, faculty qualifications, graduation projects and programme completion rates.