

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews Programme Review Report

**Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland - Medical
University of Bahrain
School of Postgraduate Studies and Research
Master of Science in Nursing
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Site Visit Date: 5 –7 April 2021

HA013-C3-R013

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Acronyms

AB	Advisory Board
ANP	Advanced Nursing Practice
APA	Annual Programme Analysis
APRs	Academic Programme Reviews
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CPC	Clinical Placement Coordinator
CSS	Centre for Student Success
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HSEQ	Health, Safety, Environmental, and Quality
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MIS	Management Information Systems
MHSB	Medical Health Sciences Board
MMRs	Module Monitoring Reports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSc. N	Master of Science in Nursing
NGP	Nursing Graduate Profile
NMBI	Nursing & Midwifery Board of Ireland
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NUI	National University of Ireland

PAB	Programme Advisory Board
PDU	Professional Development Unit
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QEC	Quality Enhancement Committee
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMS	Quality Management System
RCSI-MUB	Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland -Medical University of Bahrain
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RSS	Research Summer School
SAR	Self-assessment Report
SARA	Student Academic Regulatory Affairs
SCARs	Student Clinical Academic Records
SNAC	School of Nursing & Midwifery Academic Committee
SONM	School of Nursing & Midwifery
SPGS&R	School of Postgraduate Studies and Research
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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 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 Postgraduate Studies and Research
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Master of Science in Nursing
Qualification Approval Number	Cabinet of Ministers Decree Number DRM/22/413 of 2004 HEC Letter No. 27- SGHEC/2011 of 2011
NQF Level	9
Validity Period on NQF	5 years from Validation Date
Number of Units*	8
NQF Credit	240
Programme Aims*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with a knowledge base appropriate to post graduate learning. • Provide students with the necessary knowledge to critically appraise and apply research methodologies. • Develop a student's ability to critically examine assumptions and to question values, beliefs and policies underpinning health and health care, at individual and organisational level. • Develop students as reflective practitioners with the skills, confidence and awareness necessary to identify, influence, implement and evaluate evidence-based practice.

<p>Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a systemic understanding and critical awareness of current challenges and/or new insights at the forefront of nursing and health. • Critically self-evaluate their professional and personal learning needs consistent with their area of practice and their continuing professional development. • Take significant responsibility to develop a research proposal and undertake supervised research in an area appropriate to their area of practice. • Critically evaluate the cultural environment in which health care is delivered and engage in critical discussion of a variety of professionals on key contemporary discourses in nursing and health.
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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	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Addressed
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	Partially addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Not applicable

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	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	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.

Judgment: *Partially Addressed*

- The Master of Science in Nursing (MSc. N) programme was licensed by the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Bahrain in 2011. The Panel notes that there is a clear institutional and programme planning process that is relevant to the license approval and occupational standards. Programme descriptions include information on the importance of research principles, teaching and learning strategies, programme objectives and structure and content.
- The Panel notes that the programme is evaluated regularly. RCSI has a crisis management plan that addresses health hazards, such as handling hazardous materials in laboratories. The COVID-19 pandemic has raised potential risks that have affected the quality of the study programme; consequently, necessary modifications are described comprehensibly and realistically in the SER. However, there is no systematic risk register for potential hazards and mitigation measures, and the crisis management plan does not focus on risks in academic training. Hence, the Panel recommends that the MSc. N programme should develop a detailed risk register, including risk assessments, mitigation measures, and management tools, to address potential and actual risks, including those in academic settings.
- The MSc. N programme has been placed since 2017 on level 9 of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and is due to NQF revalidation in 2021. The Panel notes that the programme adheres to the NQF qualification's design requirements including the mapping and confirmation processes.

- The Panel notes that the title of the MSc. N programme is concise and appropriate for the degree type and content. The title or certificate designation is clearly described in the HEC license and the programme specification document.
- The stated aims of the programme are compatible with the overarching aim, which is to educate students as reflective caregivers and contribute to the academic orientation of Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland – Medical University of Bahrain (RCSI-MUB). During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clear that stakeholders are regularly involved in the revision of the programme aims. The Panel appreciates the excellent practices that the programme follows to engage stakeholders, such as the steering committees with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and private clinics, student representation on the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), and the roles and functions of the Programme Advisory Board.
- The Master's programme supports the strategic aims of the School of Postgraduate Studies & Research (SPGS&R) and follows the RCSI-MUB mission. The programme systematically follows on from the undergraduate nursing programme. However, the Panel notes, that the programme aims are not entirely clearly described. While the programme includes research papers as dissertations and a connection between research and evidence-based practice is sought, it is not entirely clear whether the programme is focusing on nursing science research or a clinical application. Such a clear orientation could not be reached in the virtual site visit interviews either. Hence, there is a need for a clearer description of the programme's focus, e.g., on empirical research-based education or an explicit clinical focus, for future development. The Panel, therefore, recommends that SPGS&R should ensure that the programme aims are more defined and include a clearer description of the programme's focus.
- During the virtual site visit interview with RCSI management, the Panel attempted to clarify the relationship between RCSI-MUB (known as RCSI Bahrain) and RCSI Dublin. The Panel notes that most 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 Dublin and the results are then shared with RCSI Bahrain. Students who complete the programme receive two certificates upon graduation: The degree of Master of Science in Nursing (RCSI-MUB) and the degree of Master of Science in Nursing (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

- Graduate attributes at the institutional level are not clearly documented for the master's programme. The same characteristics are named for master's students as for bachelor's students. During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clearer that the basic characteristics are the same for both programmes. The Panel recommends that the RCSI-MUB should develop a separate set of generic graduate attributes for the programme's students.
- The Panel notes that the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are clearly stated in the SER and the programme specifications. The Panel also notes that the PILOs are covered by the programme objectives and well-aligned with the mission statement.
- The PILOs are written using measurable action verbs and satisfy the NQF level 9 descriptors for knowledge, skills, and competencies. During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clear that internal and external benchmarking against international norms was only made with the programme of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) and the Ulster University Northern Ireland (see the recommendation under Indicator 4.3).
- The Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) and objectives are mapped to the NQF level descriptors, and the Panel notes that they are appropriate to reflect the depth of knowledge, complexity, competence and skills of the Master's level. The classification of CILOs as knowledge and understanding, subject specific skills, critical thinking and transferable skills are in line with the NQF requirements and helps to ensure the clarity and consistency of the CILOs' language. The Panel notes, that these outcomes are captured and documented in the scorecards. The Panel notes that CILOs progression is consistent with the course-level progression and the CILOs satisfy the requirements of the NQF. The module/course descriptors include CILOs that are appropriately linked to the level and content descriptors. The alignment between PILOs and CILOs was not consistently clear in the course descriptors of 2020-2021. During interviews with the faculty members, these ambiguities were resolved, and continuous alignment and reflection were described in detail. However, in the interview with students, they described these ambiguities in relation to the assessment of their results and requested a clearer formulation of the CILOs. Therefore, the Panel advises the School to ensure clearer communication of CILOs to students.
- The programme is not fundamentally research-based. However, there are two courses in the programme, which are research-related: 'Advanced Research Methods I' (MScN4) and 'Advanced Research Methods II' (MScN7) in addition to a research dissertation, which is a required component for the completion of the degree. The contents of these courses fulfill requirements in critical analysis and systematic evaluation of evidence and ethical considerations and thus help students to achieve the PILOs.

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 programme specification covers the requirements of the MSc. N programme and allocates courses to semesters. The programme contains a total of eight courses, each is assigned to an NQF level. For each course there is a differentiated course description and a mapping score card. The prerequisites for the respective course, as well as the respective crediting for units, are described in the course descriptors of 2020-2021. The Panel notes that the organization and sequencing of courses in the curriculum is appropriate and the workload of the students is reasonable.
- As per the evidence and the Benchmarking Report for Master's in nursing, the curriculum is regularly updated based on benchmarking. In addition, annual feedback from students and external facilitators is incorporated into the revisions of the curriculum; this includes alignment with changing professional standards. The last minor update of the curriculum was completed in 2020. This was confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews with faculty members, external moderators and alumni.
- The curriculum aims for a balance between theory and practice. During the virtual site visit interviews, the employers and students reported that there is a good balance between the demands of the clinical field and the preparation provided by the study programme. The Panel notes that the 'Reflection on Practice' (MSCN1) course, in particular, relates to practice theory discourse. The research-related courses such as MSCN4 and MSCN7 focus on patient care issues. The thesis as a capstone course addresses topics relevant to nursing science and the field of practice. The remaining modules are not directly related to practice but address topics relevant to practice.
- The Panel notes that each course is clearly described and covers the elements that are expected in terms of depth and breadth. As per the evidence submitted, the content of courses is reviewed and the intended and achieved CILOs are checked. All courses address competencies related to knowledge, critical thinking, subject-specific skills as described, and transfer skills equivalent to the level of a master's degree. For example, in the 'Reflection on Practice' (MScN1) course, an outcome as a transferable skill is described as 'synthesizing the concept of reflection to improve their clinical practice'.
- As per the SER and evidence submitted, the courses are based on the current state of the art of nursing science. The available databases and the library support the students in an appropriate way. The literature is regularly checked for topicality, as stated in the Library

Weeding Policy. The Panel notes that textbooks are up to date and appropriate for the course content. Since little research is conducted by faculty members, little use is made of their own research literature.

- As mentioned earlier, the programme includes two Advanced Research Methods courses that contribute to the achievement of the PILOs: one in the first year and the other in the second year of study. These courses provide appropriate instruction in the fundamentals of empirical research. These fundamentals enable the student to complete a dissertation at the conclusion of the programme. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in research-related events.
- The Panel notes that fundamentals in ethics are taught in the Advanced Research Methods courses. In addition to the principles of ethical research rationale, other ethical perspectives on healthcare are addressed in the 'Health Discourses & Society' (MScN6) course. The individual supervisor has to ensure that ethical approval from the ethics committee is appropriate, ethical standards are met and verified in the student's research, and ethical issues are reported in the dissertation.

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 programme has a didactic theoretical underpinning and is based on the teaching and learning strategy of the RCSI-MUB. In addition, RCSI-MUB has institutional academic policies that govern different aspects of the educational process, including teaching, learning, and assessment. The Panel notes, that there are different teaching and learning methods described for each course. For example, in face-to-face contact hours, teaching methods include 'didactic teaching, questions & answers, Socratic questioning, class discussions, group work, case study reviews, role playing and scenarios and debates'. Teaching methods are described even for online contact hours and include 'voice recorded lecture notes (Camtasia), required supplemental reading to support the voice recorded material, discussion on the online discussion forum, questions & answers and appraisal and critique of the literature *via* the forum'.
- The teaching methodologies are aligned with RCSI-MUB philosophy and teaching and learning Strategy. The submitted evidence shows that the programme has multiple teaching and learning methods, which have a clear policy and are in line with the institution's teaching philosophy. The Panel notes that the teaching methods used are described in the individual course descriptions. For example, as in the MScN7 course,

'small group work sessions, flip class technique, Socratic questioning, class discussions, case study reviews' are mentioned. These course descriptions are reviewed annually, and this review process was clearly described by the instructors during the virtual site visit.

- E-learning is a part of the teaching and learning policy, as stated in the Teaching and Learning Strategy and Distance Learning Quality Framework documents and supports the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. The Covid-19 pandemic called for an increased focus on e-learning, and this was expanded accordingly. The handling of the extension of digital learning was sufficiently described in the interviews and was positively evaluated by the students.
- Lifelong learning is part of the 'Unit Objectives' in the course descriptors of 2020-2021 MScN2/Mapping Scorecard. Students are encouraged and supported to work independently and based on their own initiative. For example, in the 'Contemporary Issues in Nursing' (MScN3) course, students are expected to lead online discussions and conduct research.
- During the virtual site visit interviews with employers and alumni, the very encouraging attitude toward students developing their own research questions in cooperation with the clinics was evident. This innovative approach was highly supported by the RCSI-MUB staff. The Panel notes that the students have access to the relevant information and literature they need. Services and support for self-study are also available for this purpose. This includes a library service that is available on site, by telephone and e-mail. Students are additionally offered workshops to practice their research techniques. These services were rated as very supportive and helpful by the students during the virtual interviews.
- The Panel notes that students are supervised at an excellent level. Lecturers, external moderators, students and employers described that there is an intensive contact of all parties involved at the nursing school and thus a good teaching climate is created. Informally, students are supported by the Student Services Office and student engagement is encouraged through clubs, societies and voluntary activities. The Panel appreciates the various informal and non-formal learning activities that RCSI-MUB and the 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

- Assessment of student performance is governed by the University-wide Fair & Consistent Assessment & Evaluation of Student Progress policy and the Examination and Assessment

Regulations, as well as the Marks and Standards policy at the programme level. The Panel notes that the aim and scope of these policies and regulations comply with the legislation and the requirements of the BQA, National University of Ireland (NUI), and the HEC.

- Information on examinations and assessments is made available to all faculty members and students. This information is described in the programme specifications. During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clear, that all stakeholders have access to the information, including external moderators, appointed jointly by the Medical Health Sciences Board (MHSB) of the RCSI and the NUI.
- Faculty members reported during virtual site visit interviews that feedback on examinations and students' progress is timely. Regulations for formative & summative assessments are available to all relevant stakeholders. In addition, guidance on feedback is provided and general regulations for the conduct of tests are available in the RCSI-MUB Examinations and Assessment Regulations document. Feedback templates for tests and final papers are used. Extensive information is available for students, e.g. information related to plagiarism or complaint management, in the Plagiarism Policy, Student Complaint Policy, and Post Graduate Students Exceptional Circumstances Policy 2020-2021.
- During the virtual site visit, it became clear in discussions with faculty members, external stakeholders and students that the ethical principles taught during the courses have also found their way into the research process. Such ethical principles are particularly present in the first- and second-year research methods courses.
- Research content is taught in MScN4 and MScN7 courses, culminating in a dissertation in the second year. In this context, student progress and needs are monitored on a regular basis by supervisors in tutorials. It was also clear from the virtual site visit interviews and the provided evidence that the dissertation is related to the field of practice. The Panel notes, that course contents can be applied in the practice field. Direct feedback and support are also provided by supervisors on the dissertation projects, and a Supervision Best Practice Guideline is available.
- The mechanisms used for grading students' achievements are available in the assessment policy. Feedback of the supervisors is provided in written form. Internal and external moderation is regularly used. It was evident during the virtual site visit interviews that regulations for internal and external moderators are known by all persons involved in internal and external moderation. Students also reported an outstanding fair evaluation of their study results.
- Academic integrity is considered a core ethical principle for all students, and a course on avoiding plagiarism is mandatory for students as stated in the Plagiarism Policy and Student Complaint Policy. The policy details the definitions of plagiarism, student

responsibility, university response, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism. The plagiarism policy also includes provisions and mechanisms for preventing and dealing with misconduct. The regulations outline the process for dealing with first-time and repeated academic misconduct. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, the matter can be resolved at the programme level or referred to university authorities. In addition to this policy, students must also comply with the regulations of the 'RCSI Bahrain Master's in Nursing Programme Student Handbook'. For the preparation of research papers, the regulations are also defined in the 'Academic Regulations for Research Degrees' document. During the virtual site visit interviews, students confirmed that they use the RCSI's online resource on plagiarism in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). They confirmed that the plagiarism resource in the VLE provided them with an understanding of the types of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

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 Panel notes that the programme has an appropriate published Admissions Policy, with equal opportunities between females and males. Admission information for students is also available in the MSc. N Brochure. All relevant stakeholders are well aware of the Admissions Policy and the MSc Nursing Application Procedure, which are consistently implemented, as confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews with students and faculty members. Based on interviews with students and alumni, the Panel notes that there is a standardized admissions process that treats applicants equally regardless of gender or sponsorship.
- The admissions process is clearly described in the Admissions Policy document. Prospective students go through a structured admission interview conducted by RCSI Senior Academics. A brochure is available on how to apply for interested candidates. Supportive services, particularly for candidates and students with disabilities, are available and are described in the Student Health and Wellbeing Support Requirements Handout.
- The required academic performance and language proficiency are clearly stated in the Admissions Policy. The Panel acknowledges that the admission requirements are appropriate and comparable to international standards. Access, transfer and progression at RCSI-MUB are regulated by the Academic Policy. Although, there are rules for recognizing prior learning experiences, RCSI_MUB currently does not accept transfer students and students are not permitted to transfer from the RCSI_MUB institute to another in the MSc. N. programme. The Panel advises the School to reconsider this rule and practice, which may prevent qualified candidates from joining the programme.

- Benchmarking covers new student admission. The comparison is made between the programme and the Nursing and NMBI Standards for Post Graduate Programmes leading to Major Awards (2015). The Admissions Committee uses the results from the evaluation of admissions goals, student progress, market needs, feedback from internal and external facilitators, and employers to enable comparison with similar programmes, to review and, if necessary, actualize admissions policies.

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 programme has clear procedures in the Academic Promotion Policy and guidelines for the recruitment and promotion of academic staff members. Criteria for promotion are well-defined and guidelines for a systematic selection of applicants are outlined in the Recruitment & Selection Policy. During the virtual site visit interviews, it was confirmed that all vacant positions are advertised so potential candidates have equal opportunities to apply. It was also clear that promotion reviews and decisions are made exclusively by RCSI Dublin. The Panel advises the University to review its current promotion policy and practices to give RCSI-MUB and SPGS&R a role in the promotion.
- The induction policy is detailed in the Staff Learning & Development Programme, including procedures that extend from the time the employee signs the offer letter until the end of the induction. During the virtual site visit, the Head of School and faculty confirmed that their performance is annually appraised according to the RCSI_MUB general competency framework and through the use of the Professional Development Planning form. The Panel notes that the form is aligned with RCSI's general competency framework. However, the Panel suggests revising the form to include objective measurements and indicators (e.g., student evaluation of faculty and courses, list of publications, awards, local and national services, etc.).
- The operational plan of SPGS&R includes aims and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for research. However, based on the provided data, the research productivity and output do not meet the KPIs. The Panel recommends that the SPGS&R should develop clear strategic aims for the research pillar with specific strategies, actions, and KPIs to enhance the scholarship productivity and research output by faculty.
- The Panel notes most of the lecturers have a doctorate degree and an adequate range of academic qualifications, specializations and expertise. During the virtual site visit

interviews, it could not be clearly clarified how the individual workload is composed, or what workload the individual faculty members have. It became clear that the Head of School expected faculty members to balance their workloads with the various demands themselves. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the SPGS&R should develop and establish a clear model for staff workload.

- 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.
- RCSI-MUB has a clear Staff Learning and Development Policy and generally supports staff in their professional development. Faculty staff members training needs are identified by the Head of Department/Head of School and the training is organized internally by the Learning and Development Committee. The criteria for application and financial support for professional development are defined in the related policy. 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 SPGS&R to develop a systematic plan to evaluate the long-term effects of professional development opportunities.
- The Panel notes that time is made available for the supervision of the empirical work of the students. Staff members are provided with opportunities for further training and hence improving their capacity for supervising research theses. They are encouraged to continue their education and there are criteria defined for this purpose. The Staff Learning and Development Policy includes strategies of the SPGS&R for development opportunities of faculty members, such as requesting assistance in obtaining advanced certificates/diplomas, postgraduate degrees, or doctorates.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, faculty members mentioned that RCSI-MUB and SPGS&R 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 virtual tour of the campus indicated that the number of classes and ancillary spaces available, such as lounges, reading rooms, or exercise rooms, are adequate, considering the number of students admitted to the MSc. N programme. The classes and laboratories are well-equipped and adequate in terms of their size and numbers. Among other things, this was made evident by the virtual tour of the university and the evidence provided.
- The Panel notes from evidence submitted and the SER that Information Technology (IT) media is available and IT equipment including Wi-Fi, e-communication, laptops, etc. are up-to-date. The IT infrastructure, equipment and technical support are sufficient to meet the needs of students and staff. Students and faculty reported during virtual site visit interviews that the available technologies and IT support meet their needs and the learning needs of students. The Panel appreciates RCSI for its up-to-date IT infrastructure as well as physical and material resources, that cover the needs of students and faculty.
- The library is easily accessible, and e-books and journals are available. Complementary activities that were and are necessary in the library within the framework of Covid-19- are described in detail in the SER. Based on the virtual site visit 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 MSc. N students' needs.
- The Panel notes that all RCSI-MUB students are provided with their own secure institutional Microsoft account, which is maintained by RCSI-MUB resources related to firewalls and anti-virus software. IT support for students and staff is consistent and easily accessible. According to the RCSI Health, Safety, Environmental, and Quality (HSEQ) manual, resources, equipment, safety tools, and facilities are regularly checked for effectiveness. Furthermore, RCSI-MUB has a crisis plan that manages various scenarios that may negatively affect campus life.
- RCSI-MUB has appropriate arrangements and measures to protect the health and maintain the safety of staff and students. The procedures that contribute to safety on campus are numerous, and the regulations are laid down in a separate guideline. Other necessary safety procedures, such as those required in connection with the Covid 19 pandemic, are defined in a differentiated manner and are easily obtainable for students.

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

- The programme has a Management Information System (MIS), which is used to manage student data; it includes student personal, financial and academic data. The use and effectiveness of e-learning resources is adequate; student engagement with course content is captured through the course and activity schedule. During the virtual site visit, students reported that regular checks are made to ensure that Internet access is sufficiently resilient and that the latest programme versions are available. The Panel was informed that many upgrades have been carried out based on assessments and monitoring of the system and the support given by the Information Communication Technology (ICT) unit for ease of use by students and staff. Access to the data is secure based on the user's responsibilities and privileges. The demonstration of the MIS showed that it contains a significant amount of data that can inform the decision-making process in the programme.
- The MSc. N programme employs various ways to track, monitor, and report the utilization of resources (e.g., e-learning and libraries). For example, the utilization of the Internet bandwidth was monitored and reported. It was verified during the virtual site visit interviews with the IT support staff that virtual systems and software are monitored regularly to make decisions on necessary changes or updates.
- The Panel notes that there is a document entitled Student Records Policy and Procedures, which tackles 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.
- Two different certificates are issued to students and both certificates include accurate titles and credentials of the qualification. One is the final transcript, upon completion of studies and a provisional transcript, to show academic status. Blockchain technology is currently being tested to see if it is suitable for a secure digital certificate. The Student Records policy and Procedure and Academic Policies are reviewed annually. In the virtual site visit interviews, students 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

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB fully supports equal access to the master's programme spatial structures (e.g., library, laboratories, e-learning) between students of different genders. A wide range of information is available to support students, both for their studies and in a personal context.
- The Career Counsellor provides students with guidance, professional development support and advice at different stages of their education. Career planning opportunities are available, such as professional days. However, students and alumni reported during the interviews that students who were not sponsored (e.g. by employers) received little career planning support. The Panel recommends that the School should provide equal career guidance to all students regardless if they are sponsored by their employers or not.
- During the virtual site visit, the Panel learned that extensive supporting material is available for first year students. All new students in the master's programme undergo an orientation programme which is integrated into the first week of their Programme that includes relevant information on, for example, policies, procedures, basic information on ethical standards, and academic integrity. The content of this orientation programme is taught by faculty members. It became clear during the virtual site visit interviews that students and alumni are very supportive and appreciate the provided programmes and services. The Panel appreciates RCSI-MUB for having multiple programmes and services that help students adjust to university life.
- The SPGS&R maintains services to help students achieve their academic outcomes. For example, in addition to providing instruction on library resources, the library offers courses on research strategies and citation styles, as well as working with reference management programmes, to all students who request them. The Panel notes that for academic development and learning support, both as individual support and for groups, resources are provided by two Learning Support Tutors of the Centre for Student Success (CSS). In addition, mentors are available to provide support during the course of study, as reported during the virtual site visit interviews.
- As per the SER, RCSI-MUB strives to promote women in terms of gender equality, non-discrimination against women, supporting and uplifting working women. The Student Health and Wellbeing Department supports female students who are expecting a baby

and who have a family to manage. There is a dedicated Student Maternity Policy for students who are pregnant.

- All cases of medical history and disability are managed by the Student Health and Wellbeing Department. Students with disabilities (whether temporary or permanent) or special needs are covered by the University's Policy on Reasonable Accommodation. During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clear that no students with disabilities were enrolled in the programme in the past five years. The Panel was informed that health campaigns on mental health awareness, healthy eating, hydration, immunizations and smoking cessation workshops are offered for all students.
- The programme has mechanisms to monitor, identify, and support academically at-risk students. 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 department for counselling.
- The Panel notes from the virtual site visit interviews and submitted evidence that students are asked for feedback, to help the Student Development and Wellbeing department tailor its services and programmes to meet student needs. Students are asked to evaluate the support services, and forms are available to submit requests and needs in writing. These requests include, as an example, a longer opening time of the CSS.

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 Panel notes that the MSc. N programme has assessment methods that meet the academic standards of the programme and its NQF level. As per the SER, continuous formative and summative assessments take place throughout all semesters of the programme, with high value summative assessments taking place at the end of the semesters. Students' assessment is based on several well-structured regulations such as Nursing Marks and Standards Regulations, Examinations and Assessment Regulations. This was confirmed by the submitted evidence and during the virtual site visit interviews.
- The University's overall approach to assessment is captured in the Examinations and Assessment document, approved each year by the MHSB. There are detailed procedures for preparing, conducting, and evaluating various assessment methods. These procedures include verification that the assessment methods are consistent with the PILOs and graduate attributes. The Panel notes that while the link between the assessment and the PILOs appears to be appropriate, graduate attributes at the institutional level are not clearly documented for the master programme (see the recommendation under Indicator 1.2).
- The linkage between assessment and curriculum in RCSI-MUB occurs at the level of the course. The Panel notes that relevant curriculum elements are assured through an explicit process of assessment blueprinting that maps the PILOs, CILOs, and assessment methods. This mapping, along with the assessment validity verification, supports the graduates' achievement of the learning outcomes. Upon reviewing some assessment samples and moderation reports, the Panel notes that the assessment methods are appropriate in terms of alignment with learning outcomes and with course levels.
- The Examinations and Assessment document sets out the principles and mechanisms used for monitoring and improving the assessment. Assessments are reviewed internally

and externally before and after assessment administration, to ensure that appropriate assessment methods are used. During the virtual site visit interviews, it became clear that improving the assessment process is being worked on systematically by faculty members. 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 clear rules and procedures for dealing with academic misconduct and plagiarism cases, which are implemented and facilitated through the VLE with the purpose of raising awareness. As per the SER and the submitted evidence, 'RCSI-MUB upholds the principle of academic integrity and therefore considers plagiarism to be a serious academic offence and a breach of the RCSI-MUB Postgraduate Student Code of Conduct'. During the virtual site visit interviews, the 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 Postgraduate Code of Conduct on its VLE but also requires students to complete an online course on academic integrity.
- The Panel notes that there are sound processes in place for deterring and detecting plagiarism and academic misconduct. To deter plagiarism, new students are required to declare their adherence to the Postgraduate Code of Conduct and Programme Guidelines upon joining RCSI-MUB. Professionalism and Ethics are also a key theme in the MSc. N programme, as is evidenced throughout the research courses. To detect plagiarism, students are required to submit all written assignments through the plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) and have to have final submissions with a similarity index below 20%.
- RCSI has a scientific integrity working group and a Student Academic Regulatory Affairs (SARA) office for dealing with misconduct and plagiarism cases in line with the RCSI-MUB disciplinary process. During the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel learned that RCSI has a Research Ethics Committee that reviews the research proposals submitted by students, to ensure that they meet established ethical standards and there have been no formal disciplinary cases among students in the past five years.

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: *Partially Addressed*

- RCSI-MUB has appropriate pre-assessment internal moderation procedures to verify the appropriateness of the assessment tools and their alignment to the CILOs. Post-assessment internal moderation takes place after all summative assessments, as explained in the Examinations and Assessment Regulations document. The Panel notes that the process of internal moderation is conducted by suitably qualified faculty who have not been involved in the course or in the first marking, to ensure consistency in assessment and fairness of grading. This is done by reviewing a sample of students' marked works, with reference to the course assignment guidelines and CILOs as set out in the course descriptor and confirmed in the virtual site visit interviews.
- Based on the virtual site visit interviews with faculty members and upon reviewing samples of Module Monitoring Reports (MMRs), the Panel was able to confirm that the internal moderation is in place and contributes to ensuring consistent assessments and fairness of grading. The Panel notes that when grades are changed, justifications are provided. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the findings and feedback of internal moderation are included in the MMRs and utilised to assure and improve the programme quality. Overall, the Panel is of the view that the MSc. 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 forums where internal moderation is discussed. First, upon completing the moderation, internal moderators, course coordinators, and markers meet to discuss the findings and recommendations of the internal moderation and to determine whether the marking is consistent with the assessment criteria and is undertaken at the appropriate standard. Second, the external moderators provide general comments on the internal moderation to improve the effectiveness of the programme's internal moderation processes.
- Based on the provided evidence and during the virtual site visit interviews with School administrative staff and programme staff, the Panel was able to confirm that there are formal procedures for the external moderation of assessments that are consistently implemented and contribute to the review and improvement of the programme. During the site visit interviews, the moderation processes were explained in detail to the Panel; Furthermore, the Panel notes that currently only one external moderator is available for the MSc. N programme. The Panel recommends that the School should increase the

number of external moderators, to further assure the effectiveness of the programme's external moderation process.

- External moderators are expected to review detailed information such as the assessment blueprinting process that maps the PILOs, CILOs, and assessment methods. They receive copies of the curriculum and are invited to comment on the programme/course contents and assessment methods. They are required to submit detailed reports to RCSI_MUB, which are disseminated by the registry team to the relevant key stakeholders, as confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews with School administrative staff and programme staff. The Panel acknowledges that the external moderation process is in place and this was confirmed during the interviews and by the provided report samples.
- The external moderator reports are reviewed and considered, through the School of Nursing & Midwifery Academic Committee (SNAC). Following a detailed review, the Programme Director constructs a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which addresses points raised by external moderators, as confirmed in the virtual site visit interviews. The NUI seeks all external moderation reports and the associated QIPs and makes sure that the recommendations of the external moderators are met. The Panel notes, however, 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 SPGS&R formally and regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the external moderators' reports and share the evaluation with NUI to inform their decision on the current and future external selection of external moderators.

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: 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.

Judgment: Addressed

- The MSc. N is a taught master's programme with a research dissertation as a required component for the completion and award of the degree. In year two of the programme, students are required to demonstrate an understanding of the research process by writing a dissertation. The Panel notes that there are regulations for the preparation of the dissertation and the procedure and responsibilities are described clearly in the SER. Based on the submitted evidence and the virtual site visit interviews with the students and faculty members, the Panel was able to confirm that the dissertation contributes to the achievement of the PILOs.
- The roles and responsibilities of the supervisors and students are clear in the policies and procedures and are communicated to students and supervisors. Expectations of supervisors, their roles and responsibilities are defined in the Best Practice Guidelines. The expectations for students are stated in the module descriptions. These expectations include, for example, setting clear goals, setting clear timelines, and providing timely written feedback on all written work. The Panel learned during the virtual site visit interviews that the academic supervisors are SPGS&R faculty members who hold a doctoral qualification. Assignment of supervision is primarily based on the areas of research of the individual faculty member and on their availability.
- The supervision process is guided by the RCSI_MUB Best Practice Guidelines for Supervision, RCSI_MUB Guidelines for Postgraduate Studies, and the Dissertation Guidelines. The supervisor guidelines incorporate a protocol for supervision, which is 'intended to facilitate a standard approach to supervision, whilst acknowledging the individual responsibilities of students and the academic autonomy of the academic supervisor' as per the SER. The Panel learned during the virtual site visit interviews with students and faculty members that students are also encouraged to maintain close contact with their supervisors during the preparation of the dissertation. However, from the interviews with alumni; the Panel was informed that some supervisors are difficult to communicate with and, as a result, the Panel advises the School to improve the communication channel between the student and the supervisor to ensure greater satisfaction of students with the supervision process.
- The Panel notes that there are adequate mechanisms in place for the assessment of dissertations. All research proposals must be approved by the RCSI Research Ethics Committee and registered with the HEC. Students receive provisional marks following the completion of their dissertation and are required to present their work to a Panel chaired by an external assessor, the student supervisor and other SPGS&R faculty member who can be the Programme Director and/or Head of School in line with best practices and the HEC regulations.

- There are mechanisms in place for monitoring and ensuring the implementation of the dissertation's supervision and assessment processes. As per the SER, RCSI-MUB ensures its compliance with the HEC regulations, which require the arrangement of Viva Voce/Defense interviews. During the virtual site visit interview, the Panel was informed that the programme uses a system to monitor and review the progress of students in their dissertation and to measure their satisfaction with the supervision process and implement the necessary improvements, when needed.

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 samples of students' assessed work and dissertations that were submitted to the Panel show an adequate level of performance, which meets the MSc. N programme's academic standards and level. The ability of students to create and innovate are reflected in some of their research project samples. However, the Panel notes that the SER and the provided evidence did not include any initiatives or information related to the enhancement of the students' ability to create and innovate. The Panel advises to adopt new initiatives/strategies that encourage students to become more creative and innovative.
- The SER includes some statistics and information in relation to the students registered and admitted to the programme in the last five academic years. It shows that the mean length of the study period is 2.3 years. Based on these statistics and the virtual site visit interviews with School administrative staff and programme staff, the Panel was able to confirm that the ratios of admitted students to successful graduates including year-on-year progression, retention, and length of study are comparable to other similar programmes.
- As per the SER, the Careers and Alumni office manages a Careers and Alumni Customer Relations Management software (CRM), which has been used to store the required data on the MSc. N graduates since 2010, including graduate destinations. During the virtual site visit, a demonstration of the data collection system was presented to the Panel. During this demonstration, the Panel learned that the collected data and information are used in the evaluation of the programme by the Committee for Postgraduate Studies and Research.
- The programme uses alumni and employers' surveys to assess satisfaction with the graduates' knowledge and skills. Both surveys elicited feedback indicating a high satisfaction rate with the programme's graduates and this was confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews with the programme's stakeholders.

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

- The Panel notes that the institutional policies and regulations such as the Academic Policies meet the needs and govern the functions of the MSc. N programme. There are policies for students, faculty, Quality Assurance (QA), safety and maintenance, and certifications. During the virtual site visit interviews with management and faculty, the Panel verified that the policies and procedures are consistently implemented. For example, for academic promotion, faculty confirmed in the interviews the process of promotion as stated in the academic promotion policy and application. RCSI_MUB management affirmed that policies are reviewed regularly. Furthermore, the Panel notes that the submitted policies have been recently reviewed, as evidenced by the dates stated on the policies' front pages. Faculty, students, and staff affirmed, during the interviews, that they have access to policies and regulations through their portals and VLE. Also, the Panel verified that updates on policies and regulations are communicated to faculty and students through their departments.
- The Panel notes a clear organizational structure of quality assessment and enhancement that specifies the roles and responsibilities of the QEC and the Quality Monitoring Committee. There is a specific QA policy and a detailed handbook for QEC. The Panel notes that the 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 MSc. N programme follow the procedures detailed in the handbook. The Head of Quality Enhancement Office and the programme representative in the Quality Monitoring Sub-Committee clarified their role and communication channels. In addition, during the virtual site visit, there was a clear demonstration of the RCSI-MUB Quality Management System (QMS). The Panel notes that the QMS provides useful data and reports that inform the programme decisions. The Panel appreciates the comprehensive and systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting shown in the demonstration of the QMS system.

- The Panel notes that RCSI-MUB has implemented some strategies to ensure consistent application of policies and procedures across 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, which keeps all parties informed and ensures consistent understanding and application of policies and regulations. During the interview with the Programme Advisory Board (PAB), the Panel noticed that the PAB plays a significant role in ensuring a uniform application, since it receives reports about academics, students, and staff. Another strategy is that of the formation of the Operations Management Group, which includes representatives from all departments, units, and schools.
- During the virtual site visit interviews, staff confirmed that they consistently follow the procedures detailed in the QA E-Handbook. The Panel notes that all staff members are aware of their specific roles and responsibilities toward the QA of the MSc. N programme. The Panel verified that faculty members contribute toward QA through activities such as course monitoring, marks and standards, end-of-semester reports, among others. During the interview with supporting staff members from various units, the Panel noticed that there is ongoing communication between these units and the programme, to exchange feedback aiming to improve the quality of the programme.
- The Panel notes that the QA system at RCSI_MUB has been reviewed internally through the peer-review and self-assessment process and externally through institutional accreditation. During several interviews, the Panel verified that feedback and inputs from various stakeholders (such as employers) are systematically collected, analyzed, and reported. During the demonstration of the QMS, the Panel noticed that the system is flexible and is able to 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

- According to the SER, the MSc. N programme is managed collectively by an Executive Team including the Head of SPGS&R, MSc. N Programme Director, the Head of the School of Nursing & Midwifery (SONM), and the Head of Academic & Regulatory Affairs. During the interview with the MSc. N management team, the Panel clarified the lines of communication and the decision-making process of the MSc. N programme. The Panel noticed that the Head of SPGS&R is the chair of the SPGS&R Academic Committee and that the MSc. N Programme Director reports to the Head of SPGS&R. The Panel also noticed that the SONM is not sufficiently represented in the SPGS&R Academic

Committee and its role is limited to faculty teaching allocation. The Panel is of the view that a master's programme in nursing is best managed by nursing faculty with graduate education experience. Hence, the Panel advises RCSI-MUB to re-examine the organizational relationship between the MSc. N Programme Director and the Head of SONM.

- Based on provided evidences and the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel notes that there are clear lines of communication and reporting in academic affairs, course assignment, curriculum management, and teaching responsibilities. However, as mentioned earlier, the decision-making process at the level of the programme management needs clarification. It could not also be conclusively clarified where final programme decisions are made, meaning whether in Bahrain or in Ireland.
- The Panel reviewed the evidentiary materials related to committees and posts. The Panel notes that all committees at RCSI-MUB have clear and updated terms of reference and that posts have clear job descriptions. The Panel also notes the regular review of committees' terms of reference, minutes, and agenda.
- According to the SER, the Head of SPGS&R has responsibility for overseeing the quality and delivery of the MSc. N programme. However, the Panel is of the view that the Head of the SONM, and the MSc. N Programme Director should have more involvement and representation in the administration of the MSc. N programme (see the previous recommendation).
- The SER includes narratives that indicate successful management of the programme on the academic level. In the interviews with faculty, students, alumni, and clinical partners, the MSc. N programme management was appreciated. The Panel acknowledges that persons involved in managing and supporting the programme demonstrated that they work together efficiently and effectively, and urges the RCSI to provide SONM with more autonomy in running the programme.

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 interview sessions, course coordinators confirmed that they review and report on their courses every fall and spring semester. The Programme Director confirmed that she analyzes and reports on the MSc. N programme annually in December and the Head of the SPGS&R confirmed that she reports on the QA 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 the Annual Programme Analyses (APA) include qualitative and quantitative data gathered from students, faculty, and external examiners. The MMR and APA samples also include areas needing development and suggested improvement actions based on the collected data.
- 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
- The Panel notes that RCSI_MUB has a comprehensive periodic review process detailed in the QA E-Handbook. The periodic review at RCSI_MUB is a systematic process that begins with establishing a self-assessment committee that prepares a draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR). The next step is that of 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 the QIP is monitored, and reports are generated accordingly. The process ensures the participation of internal and external stakeholders. During the virtual 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 notes that the QIPs include specific objectives, proposed actions, responsibilities, and timeframes for completion. In the following cycle of reviews, responsible parties monitor and report to the School Academic Committee on the identified QIPs. The SER includes some examples of changes and improvements made based on gathered feedback from stakeholders. During the virtual site visit interviews,

faculty and programme managers shared additional examples where the collected feedback from stakeholders informed some decisions (e.g., the revised thesis supervision protocol). The Panel witnessed a demonstration of the QMS and found it excellent for facilitating and monitoring QIPs. The Panel appreciates 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: *Partially Addressed*

- The SER refers to some benchmarking, including the NQF, NMBI, and NUI. However, the Panel notes that most benchmarking was at the institutional level. During the virtual site visit interviews with the curriculum coordinators and faculty, it was mentioned that the programme had been recently benchmarked against the NBMI's Standards for Postgraduate Programmes and the Ulster University's Northern Ireland MSc in Nursing. The Panel recommends that SPGS&R should systematically benchmark the MSc. N programme against established international professional standards and more programmes at the international and regional levels.
- Based on its recent benchmarking against the NMBI's Standards and the Ulster University's programme, the MSc. N programme has found its services, curriculum, and admission criteria comparable. The Panel notes that the benchmark results support decision making in programme development. The internal and external benchmarking currently includes the Respective Educational Providers, Programmes/Units of Learning Design and Development, Clinical Practice Experience (If Appropriate to Programmes/ Units of Learning), Assessment Process and the External Examiners. However, the Panel recommends that SPGS&R should expand the scope of benchmarking to include faculty-to-student ratio, faculty qualifications, thesis supervision process, study plans, graduate attributes, and programme outcomes in terms of completion rate, thesis completion, the satisfaction of students, employers, and alumni, among others.
- 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 MMR, APA, external examiner reports, end-of-semester evaluation surveys, and alumni and employer surveys. In addition, comments are collected during the stakeholders' (alumni and employer) engagement day and regular meetings (e.g., PAB, steering joint committees). In the virtual site visit interviews, the Panel found that

the programme collects data and the QEC collects other data. The Panel suggests that the programme be aware of the relevant data collected by the QEC.

- Stakeholders (alumni and employer) confirmed during the virtual site visit interviews that their feedback is collected in forms of written qualitative comments as part of surveys and also verbally during their meetings with the programme management and faculty. The Programme Director and the QA staff confirmed that the collected comments are analysed, and some are included in the QIPs.
- During the interviews, students, faculty, and representatives of the affiliated hospitals appreciated the communication and updates they regularly receive from RCSI. They expressed their satisfaction with how the programme handles their feedback and confirmed that some changes were based on their feedback. Similarly, representatives of the affiliated hospitals expressed their appreciation of being informed and updated by the changes made in the programme based on their feedback.

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 Panel notes that the MSc. N programme has a functioning PAB with clear terms of reference. The PAB includes the programme management team, faculty representative, and a student representative. Also, the PAB includes representatives from the affiliated hospitals and experts in nursing practice. The Panel suggests that experts in graduate nursing education, national, regional, or international, be invited to serve 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. The PAB meets regularly once a semester to advise the programme on identified QIPs and new initiatives. The SER includes several examples of changes that were made in the programme based on the recommendations of the PAB, such as ‘the development of workshops with clinical partners’ students, their managers and other appropriate senior nursing personnel, to ensure research projects are aligned to the nursing strategy and to provide support to the students on location’. The Panel acknowledges the role of the PAB and encourages the programme to continue with this best practice.
- Since it was established, the MSc. N programme has recruited students who are sponsored by their employers within and outside of Bahrain. During the virtual site visit interviews,

the Panel confirmed that the programme has mainly depended on its partnerships and agreements with hospitals to recruit students and identify market needs.

- No completed labour market studies have been reported in the SER. During the virtual site visit interviews, the Marketing Department staff confirmed a current study taking place with an external firm to identify the needs and demands for post-graduate programmes in health sciences. The Panel recommends that the School should conduct, on a regular basis, formal studies to identify the needs of healthcare sectors in Bahrain and the region.
- The Panel notes that the implemented mechanisms to scope the labour market are consistently implemented and the programme maintains ongoing communication with its stakeholders in the market and continuously assesses the needs and expectations of employers.

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 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 Nursing of School of Postgraduate Studies and Research offered by the RCSI-MUB.

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

1. The excellent practices that the programme follows to engage stakeholders, such as the steering committees with the Ministry of Health and private clinics, student representation on the Quality Enhancement Committee, and the roles and functions of the Programme Advisory Board.
2. The various informal and non-formal learning activities that RCSI-MUB and the MSc. N programme provide.
3. 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.
4. The up-to-date IT infrastructure as well as physical and material resources, that cover the needs of students and faculty.
5. The multiple programmes and services that help students adjust to university life.
6. The multiple mechanisms that the programme has in place to assess and improve the quality of assessment methods, as needed.
7. The online course on academic integrity that the students are required to complete, in addition to the availability of the Plagiarism Policy and Postgraduate Code of Conduct on the RCSI-MUB Virtual Learning Environment.
8. The comprehensive and systematic data collection, analysis, and reporting shown in the demonstration of the RCSI-MUB quality management system.
9. The introduction of the automated quality management system that RCSI-MUB uses to monitor and track Quality Improvement Plans based on surveyed data and reviews of programmes.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the RCSI-MUB should:

1. Develop a detailed risk register, including risk assessments, mitigation measures, and management tools, to address potential and actual risks, including those in academic settings.
2. Ensure that the programme aims are more defined and include a clearer description of the programme's focus.
3. Develop a separate set of generic graduate attributes for master's students.
4. Develop clear strategic aims for the research pillar, with specific strategies, actions, and Key Performance Indicator, to enhance the scholarship productivity and research output of faculty.
5. Develop and establish a clear model for staff workload.
6. Provide equal career guidance to all students regardless if they are sponsored by their employers or not.
7. Clearly specify the selection criteria of external moderators in the related policy and procedures and increase the number of external moderators, to further assure the effectiveness of the programme's external moderation process.
8. Evaluate the effectiveness of the external moderators' reports formally and regularly and share the evaluation with National University of Ireland to inform their decision on the current and future external selection of external moderators.
9. Systematically benchmark the MSc. N programme against established international professional standards and other programmes at the international and regional levels.
10. Expand the scope of benchmarking to include faculty-to-student ratio, faculty qualifications, thesis supervision process, study plans, graduate attributes, and programme outcomes in terms of completion rate, thesis completion, the satisfaction of students, employers, and alumni, among others.
11. Conduct, on a regular basis, formal studies to identify the needs of healthcare sectors in Bahrain and the region.