

الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وصنمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training



Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Bachelor in Business Administration
College of Administrative Sciences
Applied Science University
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 26-28 May 2014

HC040-C2-R040

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Acronyms

AACSB	The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
ASU	Applied Science University
BA	Bachelor in Accounting
BAF	Bachelor in Accounting and Finance
BBA	Bachelor in Business Administration
BMIS	Bachelor in Management of Information Systems
BPS	Bachelor in Political Science
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of Department
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MAF	Master in Accounting and Finance
MBA	Master in Business Administration
MHRM	Master in Human Resources Management
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance

QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QAA-UK	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – United Kingdom
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

1. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

1.1 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training (QQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the QQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

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

Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance, give confidence in the programme.

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Panel’) states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is ‘confidence’ in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator One, the programme will receive a ‘limited confidence’ judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be ‘no confidence’, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

Criteria	Judgement
All four Indicators satisfied	Confidence
Two or three Indicators satisfied, including Indicator 1	Limited Confidence
One or no Indicator satisfied	No Confidence
All cases where Indicator 1 is not satisfied	

1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Applied Science University

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Administrative Sciences (CAS) was conducted by DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on May 26 -28, 2014 for eight academic programmes offered by CAS. These programmes are: Bachelor in Accounting and Finance (BAF), Bachelor in Accounting (BA), Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA), Bachelor in Political Science (BPS), Bachelor in Management of Information Systems (BMIS), Master in Accounting and Finance (MAF), Master in Business Administration and Master in Human Resources Management (MHRM) programmes.

This report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Bachelor Degree in Business Administration (BBA) based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the Applied Science University (ASU), the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

ASU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 24th. October 2013 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of the programmes offered by its College of Administrative Sciences. On 3 March 2014, it was agreed that the exact date of the

site visit would be 26-28 May 2014. In preparation for the review, ASU conducted its College self-evaluation reports of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 27th. February 2014.

DHR constituted a Panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Business and in higher education who have experience of external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised of ten external reviewers.

This Report records the evidence-based conclusions reached by the Panel based on:

- (i) analysis of the Self-Evaluation Report and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit
- (ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)
- (iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that ASU will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its BBA programme. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of ASU to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, ASU is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to ASU for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty contributing to the BBA programme.

1.3 Overview of the College of Administrative Sciences

The College of Administrative Sciences is one of three colleges within the Applied Science University (ASU). The Programme Handbook 2013-2015 of the College states that the College was established in 2005 with a mission to meet the needs of Bahrain community and the region for specialised and qualified cadres in administrative sciences, business administration, accounting, finance, MIS and political science.

The College currently comprises four departments, namely: Business Administration, Accounting and Finance, Management Information Systems, and Political Science. The College offers five undergraduate programmes (Bachelor in Business Administration, Bachelor in Accounting, Bachelor in Accounting and Finance, Bachelor in Management Information Systems, Bachelor in Political Science)

and three postgraduate programmes (Master in Business Administration, Master in Human Resources Management, Master in Accounting) across the four departments.

The College employs 34 teaching staff members of which 30 are full-time faculty members. The SER indicates that the total number of students registered in the College during the academic year 2012-2013 is 1137.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor Degree in Business Administration

The Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) is managed by the Department of Business Administration, and was offered in 2005-2006 academic year with nine students enrolled. The programme has been reviewed in 2012-2013 and resulted in introducing many changes that were implemented in 2013-2014 academic year. The total number of admitted students has grown to 329 in 2012-2013 and 15 students graduated during the same academic year. The formal media for teaching the programme is Arabic language, except in the case of some courses such as Business Communication, Strategic Management, Management Information Systems, and Quantitative Methods, which are conducted in English. There are 17 full-time faculty members contributing to the delivery of the programme.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor in Business Administration:

Indicator	Judgement
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Satisfies
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Satisfies
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
Overall Judgement	Confidence

2. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 2.1 The ASU has clear mission and vision statements which are accessible to staff and students *via* a variety of media including the University website, the University Catalogue, and the *Programme Handbook* of the College of Administrative Sciences. The institution's vision and mission statements are well-cascaded and linked to the College of Administrative Sciences mission and aims. The Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme has an academic planning framework that clearly states the programme aims and learning outcomes. The framework has recently undergone several reviews which resulted in a revision of the programme aims. The Panel examined the evidence showing how the programme aims are mapped to the university's mission and vision statements. The Panel appreciates that the programme aims are clearly stated and contribute to the achievement of the institution's mission and vision.
- 2.2 The BBA programme is based on the American system of credit hours, and requires students to complete a total of 135 credit hours for the award of the degree. The programme consists of 45 courses, each of which has three credit hours and are set from levels one to four to progressively reflect more advanced studies. Progression is also facilitated by the inclusion of clearly stipulated prerequisite courses in the curriculum. For example, 'Principles of Accounting' is specified as a prerequisite for 'Financial Management 1' as would be expected. The courses are further categorised into University compulsory (21 credits), University elective (six credits), College compulsory (27 credits), core compulsory (75 credits), and core elective (six credits). The minimum and maximum study periods for the BBA are stated in the *Programme Handbook* as three and eight years respectively, however, the structure in the programme specification enables students to complete the programme in a standard period of four years. The Panel notes from the course files that allocation of credits for hours of study and assessment are appropriate and consistent with regional and international practice. Students interviewed also expressed their satisfaction with the workload involved in undertaking the courses. The Panel notes that there is a balance between knowledge and skills, and theory and practice in the curriculum design. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum is well-organized to demonstrate academic progression.
- 2.3 The course syllabi are well-documented in terms of the depth and breadth of contents, the relevance of topics to the BBA discipline and contemporary teaching and learning methods and assessment methods. The Panel appreciates that the course syllabi are relevant to the degree of BBA programme and its expected

outcome. Staff interviewed indicated that the course contents and intended learning outcomes were all reviewed and updated recently as a result of several benchmarking activities against similar programmes from local, regional and international institutions. The core syllabi thus cover all of the subject disciplines that are taught in a general BBA programme. The Panel notes the inclusion of courses such as Business Ethics, Leadership and Group Dynamics, and Innovation Management as compulsory courses in the curriculum. The content of these courses are appropriate for the BBA programme. The Panel learned from interviews with staff that the curriculum is regularly updated to maintain currency and relevance. The Panel also met with students and alumni who were appreciative of the curriculum content, and in particular the opportunity for students to gain practical experience in the form of an internship. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum is well-organized to demonstrate academic progression, and the workload involved is appropriate and consistent with regional and international practice

- 2.4 The Self-Evaluation Report outlines 21 programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) which are further divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding (A1-A10), critical thinking skills (B1-B5), subject – specific skills (C1-C4), and general and transferrable skills (D1-D5). The Panel notes that the PILOs are mapped to the programme aims in the programme specification. The Panel confirmed with both the programme management team and the academic staff that the recent review of the programme has involved some major changes to the original PILOs by simplifying and making them more explicit and suitable to be assessed. The Panel appreciates that the PILOs are aligned to programme aims and objectives to ensure that the standard of the programme is comparable to similar programmes internationally.
- 2.5 Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) are stated in the course specifications and are mapped to the programme ILOs. During the site visit, the Panel examined a number of course specifications along with the BBA Curriculum Skills Map (SM19) to confirm that Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for individual courses have been mapped to the PILOs. Course specifications provided during the site visit have recently been amended to incorporate higher-level learning outcomes based on Bloom’s Taxonomy as was stated in the Self-Evaluation Report (SER: 45). The Panel reviewed a sample of course files during the site visit to confirm that CILOs are included in each course specifications, and that appropriate assessment instruments are indicated. The BBA Curriculum Skills Map shows that in general the CILOs have been appropriately mapped to the PILOs. The academic staff also confirmed that they had received training on how to write CILOs and map them to PILOs. The Panel acknowledges the professional development initiatives that have been undertaken by the College of Administrative Sciences to ensure that academic staff

are knowledgeable about writing and matching course and programme ILOs to ensure the achievement of the course ILOs.

- 2.6 Work-based learning in the form of a three credit hour internship course is a compulsory element of the BBA programme. Students are required to complete 90 credit hours before they would be eligible to enrol on the internship course which is conducted over a period of eight weeks. The College has an Internship Policy which states that 50% of the assessment grade for the internship is awarded by an industry supervisor. A sample of student training report illustrated how the student internship experience is graded by the academic supervisor and two other faculty members to constitute the remaining 50% of the assessment. The academic staff interviewed during the site visit confirmed that the strategic positioning of the internship in the curriculum provides opportunities for students to demonstrate through practical application and work that they have achieved the programme learning outcomes. During meetings with alumni and employers, the Panel learned that the internship programme has been beneficial not only in providing students with employable skills, but has also assisted a number of alumni to gain employment in their internship organisations. Whilst the Panel appreciates the approach in which the College is using the internship programme to foster relationships with key employers and thereby enhance students' employment prospects, the Panel recommends that the university embrace the alumni and employers' opinion to extend the period of the internship (eight weeks) to improve students' employability skills.
- 2.7 The delivery of the BBA programme is guided by a University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy which outlines the teaching principles and methods that match the pedagogical level for a bachelor degree. The policy encourages the usage of a wide variety of teaching and learning methods to achieve the learning outcomes. The Panel noted from the interviews that the policy is well-communicated to students and faculty of the programme. Interviews with students, alumni and academic staff confirmed the appropriate use of a wide range of teaching methods to support the attainment of the programme aims and learning outcomes. It was confirmed in particular that students are encouraged to participate as active learners by several ways such as assignments, projects and class presentations, use of e-learning, group work and problem-solving activities, especially in the higher level courses, and that they find these to be beneficial for their learning. The Panel reviewed a wide sample of course files during the site visit to ensure that teaching and learning methods used in the BBA courses are appropriately related to the CILOs and course levels. The Panel appreciates that there is a Teaching and Learning Policy that is implemented to support the delivery the courses and the achievement of the aims and intended learning outcomes.

- 2.8 The assessment arrangements are generic to all ASU undergraduate programmes, and are clearly stated in the Assessment and Feedback Policy and the *Programme Handbook*. There is clear guidelines that organize students' attendance in the class, and policies and procedures for examinations and grading mechanism. The Panel also notes with appreciation the documented policy for plagiarism. In addition, there is an appeal procedure in place that ensures fairness of students grading. The Panel confirmed during interviews with staff and students that both academic staff and students are aware of the assessment policies and procedures. The interview sessions also confirmed the appropriate use of different types of formative assessment, including the use of quizzes, presentations, class tests and mid-term examinations, and summative assessment in the form of final examinations. The grading system is based on a general university guideline as follows: 20 marks for course work, 30 marks for the mid-term examination, and 50 marks for the final examination. The Panel found some variations in the grading of certain courses, and was subsequently informed that the general University guideline on grading could be varied in particular circumstances to suite the aims and intended learning outcomes of certain courses. The Panel confirmed during the interview sessions with students that the system of providing feedback to assist the learning process is consistently applied in all courses, and timely feedback is provided. Students who were interviewed expressed satisfaction that the feedback they receive help them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their work. The Panel appreciates that the arrangements for assessing students' achievements of learning are transparent and rigorous. However, the Panel recommends that a programme-specific set of guidelines to be developed for grading all courses in the BBA programme to ensure consistency.
- 2.9 In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- Programme aims are clearly stated and contribute to the achievement of the institution's mission and vision.
 - The curriculum is well-organized to demonstrate academic progression, and the workload involved is appropriate and consistent with regional and international practice.
 - Programme intended learning outcomes are aligned to the programme aims and objectives and are comparable to similar programmes internationally.
 - The curriculum has clearly stated programme intended learning outcomes covering the general and specialist knowledge and skills which are required for a BBA programme.
 - The college's approach in utilizing internship programme to foster relationships with key employers and thereby enhance students' employment prospects.

- There is an implemented teaching and learning policy to support the delivery of the courses and the achievement of the aims and intended learning outcomes.
- The arrangements for assessing students' achievements of learning are transparent and rigorous.

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

- consider extending the period of the internship programme beyond eight weeks to further improve the employability skills of the students and enhance their employment prospects
- develop a programme-specific set of guidelines for grading all courses in the BBA programme.

2.11 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the indicator on **the Learning Programme**.

3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

- 3.1 Admission to the BBA programme is conducted in accordance with the ASU university-wide admission policy for undergraduate studies. A detailed admission procedure including transferred students is published on the university website, in the university catalogue, and in the *BBA Programme Handbook*. The Panel appreciates the transparency of the admission policy for the newly admitted and transferred students. In terms of the policy, admission to the BBA programme requires a minimum score of 60% in high school, and a satisfactory level of English proficiency to be achieved in an English placement test. The Panel did not find any evidence that the ASU English placement test is benchmarked against any widely recognized English language tests for assessing applicants' ability to use and understand English at university level, such as IELTS or TOEFL. The policy also makes provision for applicants with scores of between 50-60% to be admitted to the programme if they pass an admission interview which is conducted by a committee to assess the suitability of such applicants. An example of a student interview file was provided to illustrate how the admission interviews are conducted. The Panel appreciates the manner in which the ASU admission criteria are applied diligently in the BBA selection process. The Panel, however, recommends that the College of Administrative Sciences consider introducing the IELTS and/or TOEFL examination as a benchmark for assessing the English proficiency of applicants for the BBA programme.
- 3.2 The Panel notes from the Self-Evaluation Report and from the extra evidence provided onsite, and confirmed during interview sessions with the staff responsible for programme management, that the profile of students who are admitted to the BBA programme matches the programme aims. The evidence provided in the Self-Evaluation Report shows that a large proportion of the students who graduated between 2006 and 2010 were transferring students from other universities. The department requires all applicants to the BBA programme to take and pass an English placement test, or alternatively enrol in an English Language orientation course for zero credit hours if the minimum requirement is not achieved, while applicants from a liberal arts (humanities) background are also required to take and pass an elementary Mathematics course. The Panel is satisfied that the profile of admitted students matches the aims of the BBA programme.
- 3.3 The Panel notes from the Self-Evaluation Report and from various interviews with the senior management and academic staff that there is an evident line management structure in operation for the BBA programme. The programme is managed by a

Programme Coordinator who is also the Head of the Department (HoD), while individual courses are managed by assigned Course Coordinators who are responsible for coordinating the teaching and learning activities. There is also a functioning academic committee structure which includes a Department Council, Programme and Curriculum Review Committee and Examinations Committee. The Panel examined several evidence of the functioning of the academic committee structures such as Academic Affairs and Curriculum Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Academic Standards and Examinations Committee, and a Research and Ethics Committee. During interviews with students, they highlighted that the Student Council has been highly active by having a student representative from each programme to attend the department meetings to discuss issues related to students' affairs and views. The Panel notes the active engagement of students within the programme management. The Panel is also satisfied with the department's efforts in using electronic methods to facilitate interaction and communication with students. The Panel appreciates that there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the department's structures and processes with regard to the management of the BBA programme.

- 3.4 The Business Administration Department consists of 21 faculty members; 17 full-time and four part-time staff. Sixteen of the full-time faculty members have PhD qualifications in relevant fields of study, and the remaining full-time faculty member and all the four part-time faculty members have relevant Master's qualifications. A match of the CVs to the subject allocations confirmed that there is an appropriate range of specializations for all major fields of the BBA programme. The student-to-staff ratio is 21:1, which is within international norm. However, it was also established that the faculty members in the department teach business courses in other departments within the College, which in turn would increase the actual student-to-staff ratio. During interview sessions, staff indicated that their workload is manageable for teaching although it does not allow much time for research related activities and professional practice. The Panel is satisfied that there is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to teach the BBA programme, and particularly appreciates the professionalism of the academic staff and their commitment to the successful delivery of the programme. The Panel recommends that ASU reconsider the teaching load of the staff in order to allow staff to conduct research and enhance ASU strategy – 2013-2016 for research.
- 3.5 ASU has a central Human Resources Department that is responsible for the development and implementation of policies relating to recruitment, appraisal and promotion of faculty. The Panel confirmed during interviews that the Business Administration Department is responsible for identifying requirements for new faculty by developing an annual plan based on projected student intakes. The recruitment process involves the Department, the College and a centralized

recruitment committee at the University level which is responsible to prepare a report for the College Council for approval. The department's involvement in the recruitment process includes short-listing candidates in departmental meetings who are then interviewed by a committee consisting of the HoD and two other faculty members. The committee's recommendations are then forwarded to the Dean for approval, and thereafter passed on to the HR Department for final processing to ensure compliance with the ASU appointment procedures. There is an annual appraisal process for all faculty members. The appraisal form covers most of the faculty activities during the academic year: research activities, teaching load, development of the learning process, contribution to students supports activities and community services, and professional consultation. Interviews with staff members revealed that a staff promotion policy has recently been developed by the university; hence there has not been any academic staff promotions in recent years. The Panel recommends that the University implement the newly-developed Staff Promotion Policy to ensure the retention of the highly qualified staff. There is a functioning induction process for the newly appointed staff. During interviews with faculty, the Panel learned that the induction programme for newcomers involves introduction about university services, such as Moodle, library, and IT services. It also covers presentations about HR and finance, academic, and registration and admission policies. The top managements participate in the induction to emphasis the university's vision, mission, objectives, and organization chart. Before commencing teaching classes, both full-time and part-time staff members learn about the assessment policy and other academic policies before commencing teaching classes. Current staff members expressed their satisfaction with these arrangements to the Panel. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place to prepare new recruited staff.

- 3.6 ASU has a functioning Management Information System (MIS) and a Student Information System (SIS). Examples of information that can be generated by the SIS are: list of registered students, list of courses, examination schedule, admission profile, and student registration history. The students can also use the system to register courses and view their records. During interviews, staff clarified that the SIS has been implemented effectively during the last three years and supports the students in choosing their appropriate course load with the guidance of their academic advisors. Interviews with some support staff and academics confirmed that the reports they receive from the system are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective identification and monitoring of 'at- risk' students. Evidence is provided on how the SIS is used effectively as a communication tool between at-risk students and their academic advisors. The SIS enables academic staff to enter examination marks directly into the system and is used to generate a host of reports for management decision making. Students have restricted access to the system *via* a secured login protocol and are able to access their examination results and academic records

online. The Panel observed a demonstration of the SIS during the campus tour and noticed that there are sufficient security features to ensure the integrity of the system. Interviews with some support staff and academics confirmed that the reports they receive from the system are adequate for their needs, and allow for effective identification and monitoring of 'at-risk' students. Moreover, there is an effective Human Resource Information System (HRIS) that includes all needed personnel data and reports used to help informed decisions making. There are also effective information systems for the Finance Department and the library and e-learning resources. The Panel appreciates the effective use of the available information systems across the University to serve in different aspects; especially the MIS and SIS to support teaching and learning.

- 3.7 ASU has policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of learners' information. This includes having backup copies of records on-site and off-site and data administration arrangements related to authorizations for the different levels of users. There is also a policy in place to ensure the security of records through a defined authorization mechanism, storage of data, privacy and exchange of information, the usage of anti-virus and security tools, and security agreements with users. Users are provided with unique user-names and passwords for logging onto the system. All passwords are encrypted and pass along a firewall path through a server to the database. The Panel appreciates the arrangements in place to protect students' records. All marks entered into the system are printed and reviewed independently by an assigned faculty member before being submitted to the HoD for approval, and thereafter to the Dean for authentication. An additional validation is done by the Registration Department through a 'second marks entry'. The marks and results are confirmed on the system and could then be accessed by students. Interviews with academic and administrative staff confirmed the implementation of the approval and validation procedures. The Panel also learned from the interviews conducted during the site visit and the SER that ASU has a Disaster Recovery Plan in terms of which data from the SIS is backed-up periodically to a remote site to forestall any potential loss of data through disasters such as fire. The Panel appreciates the rigour of the implemented procedures to ensure the security of learners' information and accuracy of results.
- 3.8 ASU has a new purposely-built campus, where they moved to in September 2013, which offers staff and students a pleasant environment in which to work and study. The expansion of the University allows it to accommodate the enrolled students. There are 39 classrooms and seven computer laboratories. There are other facilities such as the library, staff offices, a *Wi-Fi* enabled cafeteria, a bookstore, and a health clinic. The lecture rooms, all of which are equipped with computers and electronic projectors, are designed in different ways to accommodate different teaching styles. Each floor of the academic building has a seating area for students to relax or to use

for small group work or breakout sessions. The library is adequately resourced with books related to the BBA programme reading spaces, computers, conveniently placed LCDs to aid in allocating books, as well as online journals, periodicals and databases in both English and Arabic. The Panel was provided with a copy of the University Library Handbook and learned from interviews with the staff members that the library budget allocation is managed by following certain guidelines for the issuing and renewal of library material to staff and students. There is a large auditorium used for conferences and external events. The Panel notes the investment ASU has made in providing physical and material resources to support the delivery of the BBA programme, and appreciates that ASU has good facilities to support the students' learning experiences.

- 3.9 The SER states that tracking is conducted to provide data on student access to the e-library where the system enables the library staff to get a real-time count of learners online who are using the e-library. The tracking system also enables academic staff, in the computer laboratories, to record the students' names and their assigned tasks. Each student has a unique user name and password to register into the electronic library. The Panel learned from interviews conducted with BBA students that there is also an e-learning system (E-Brary) to allow both staff and students to download lectures, case studies and assignments. Although the tracking system facilitates staff and students communication; yet the Panel recommends that the College establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track students and staff usage and utilise its outcome to support decision-making.
- 3.10 As stated earlier, there are arrangements in place to provide support for students in the laboratories and for the use of e-resources. This is represented by having the technical support unit for the University, staff in the library, the IT assistant in the laboratory and the teaching assistants in the College. In addition, ASU has a social care unit headed by a staff member and academic advisors allocated to all students to advise them on academic issues. During the touring session, the Panel discussed with some students the support services offered by the University. The students were pleased with the availability and quality of the supporting staff. Moreover, the Panel studied the services delivered by the social care unit in order to address non-academic students' challenges. The Panel viewed the files of some cases where student's problems were resolved through the consultation with the social care unit. The Panel notes the arrangements in place and the support system provided by the academics advisors, the library, the student care unit, and the IT unit with qualified staff members.
- 3.11 An orientation and induction programme is offered at the commencement of each semester by the Deanship of Student Affairs and the Student Council where opportunity is provided for all students including transferred ones to undertake a

campus tour to familiarise themselves with the University facilities and to be introduced to the administrative and academic staff. The Panel is pleased to note the active involvement of the Student Council and senior students, as well as academic advisors, in the orientation process. There are three compulsory orientation programmes; on the University, faculty and programme levels. Training in the use of library resources was also noted as an important part of the orientation process. The Panel views the face-to-face orientation day to be very helpful in preparing students for their studies, and is pleased that efforts are made to provide material online for the benefit of those who are unable to physically attend the orientation sessions. All new students are provided with most recent University Catalogues for further information. Students confirmed the orientation process during the interview sessions, and added that course tutors in their first contact sessions demonstrate the use of the web portal to access the requisite course material. The Panel appreciates the special care that is given to students with special needs and to transferred students. The Panel appreciates the effectiveness of the conducted orientation and induction programme for new and transferred students.

- 3.12 Student progress is continually tracked by academic advisors with the assistance of HoDs through the SIS to timely identify and provide support to at-risk students. At-risk students are identified as those with a cumulative GPA of 62% or less in any given semester throughout their study period of the BBA programme. During the site visit, the Panel was provided with a 'Students at-Risk Policy-2013-2014' which clearly states the key responsibilities of students, the Registration Department, Dean of Students, and academic advisors in identifying and providing support for at-risk students. The Panel is pleased to learn that the Department has set a threshold of 62% as a proactive process to begin identifying students in the 'at-risk' category. Such students are blocked from online registration system and are required to discuss and agree an 'academic advisory plan' with their academic advisor before they are allowed to register any course. The advisor then meets with the student regularly and keeps a record of the progress made and the results of the discussion. All students are made aware of staff office hours, which are posted on staff offices doors to arrange to meet their advisors accordingly. During interviews, the Panel found that the academic advisors, together with the Registration Department and HoD, have been actively involved in identifying and counselling students ahead of time. The Panel was informed that the Department is going to have a process during which at-risk status of students is highlighted on attendance registers in order to enable course tutors to specially cater for them in the delivery of courses. The Panel appreciates the mechanisms that are in place to identify at-risk students and support them when necessary.
- 3.13 Informal workspaces are provided at convenient places for students to interact and have small group discussions. Moreover, the ASU library is modern and

comfortable with areas that allow students to meet and discuss topical issues. Students are encouraged to engage with their academic staff in discussing different topics whether formally during class or informally in the different recreation areas in the University. The Panel was informed during students' interviews, that the Deanship of Student Affairs arranges an annual 'Jobs Fair' today to expose them to potential organizations. In addition, the Panel notes that a Business Club has been formed to provide extracurricular activities to facilitate the informal sharing of student experiences. The Panel is satisfied that the overall learning environment is conducive to expand the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning.

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

- There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability embedded in the department's structures and processes with regard to the management of the BBA programme.
- The transparency of the admission policy for the newly admitted and transferred students.
- A well-functioning induction process is in place for the newly appointed staff members.
- The effective use of the information systems across the University to serve in different aspects; especially the MIS and SIS to support teaching and learning.
- Procedures that are in place to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results.
- The work of the Student Support Centre in providing accessible support for students who are enrolled on the BBA programme.
- The orientation and induction programme for new and transferred students is effective and well-managed.
- Appropriate mechanisms are in place to identify at-risk students and provide counselling and supportive intervention when necessary.
- Appropriate support is provided to the programme students by the library, the IT unit, Social Support Centre and academic advisors.
- ASU has good facilities to support students' learning experiences.

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

- include IELTS and/or TOEFL examinations as benchmarks for assessing the English proficiency of applicants for the BBA programme
- revise the academic staff teaching load to enhance research output
- expedite the implementation of the newly-developed 'Staff Promotion Policy' to ensure retention of faculty

- establish a comprehensive resource tracking system to track students and staff usage and utilise its outcome to support decision-making.

3.16 Judgement

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

4. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 4.1 The graduate attributes of the BBA programme are stipulated clearly in the Programme Specification and in the *Programme Handbook*. The Panel confirmed during interviews with the academic staff that the BBA curriculum has recently been reviewed to ensure the inclusion of attributes such as communication skills, team work, independent thinking and problem solving. The SER further illustrates how the set of graduate attributes comprising application of business knowledge, communication and intellectual skills to deal with complex business problems, how to pursue a professional career, engagement in lifelong learning, and ability to contribute to the community in an ethical and responsible manner, have been mapped to the programme aims and PILOs. Interviews with alumni and employers confirmed that the stated graduate attributes are successfully developed and assessed as students progress through the programme. The Panel notes with appreciation that the graduate attributes of the BBA programme are consistent with international standards, and are appropriately matched to the programme aims and PILOs.
- 4.2 The BBA programme has gone through a number of benchmarking activities to verify the equivalence of academic standards with similar programmes in Bahrain and internationally. Moreover, ASU has recently developed a formal benchmarking policy to formalize and streamline the benchmarking process. In line with the ASU Benchmarking Policy, the programme has been benchmarked against similar programmes from local, regional and international institutions which are AACSB accredited. The benchmarking activities covered four areas: admission criterion, programme structure, curriculum content and course specification. The Panel appreciates the good practice of benchmarking; especially that the programme team has clearly defined the purpose of benchmarking, the choice of what is benchmarked and against what, how the process is managed, and how the outcomes are used. The Panel was pleased to note from the onsite documentation and in interviews with the academic staff that efforts have been made to integrate the standards which suit the local context and enhance the delivery of the programme. The Panel appreciates the efforts exerted by faculty members to benchmark the programme with local, regional and international institutions and integrate the standards that suit the local context and enhance the delivery of the programme. However, the Panel recommends to extend the benchmarking activity to include assessment tools and the minimum percentage of the passing rate in BBA courses.

- 4.3 The BBA programme has a clear and transparent assessment and feedback policy and procedures which are in line with the general University Assessment and Feedback Policy. Interviews with students confirmed that these are made available to students through the *Programme Handbook* and on the university intranet. Interviews with students confirmed that they are fully aware of the assessment tools and strategies that are used in each course. The Panel established during interviews with the academic staff that assessment strategies are designed with due regard to the course ILOs. Course specifications examined by the Panel confirmed the matching of assessment tools and the ILOs they are intended to assess. The Panel notes that a variety of assessment tools is used such as case studies, group discussions and written examinations. During interviews, the Panel learned how the Department and the College monitor the implementation of the assessment policy and procedures to ensure effectiveness through cooperation between the Quality Assurance Unit and quality assurance coordinator in the College. The Panel acknowledges that the Department Council has conducted several meetings to monitor and review the assessment procedures to ensure consistency with the general University policy. Students interviewed were fully aware and expressed their satisfaction with the assessment tools. The Panel welcomes the idea of establishing a 'Course Assessment Board' which will play a vital role in the assessment and feedback process, and recommends speeding up its establishment and activation. The Panel appreciates that the assessment policies and procedures are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.
- 4.4 There is a mechanism to ensure that course assessments are tied to the CILOs and hence support the achievement of the programme ILOs. The course specifications indicate the assessment tools used and the ILOs these intend to assess. Moreover, the SER clarifies that the internal moderation aims to ensure that both the mid-term and final examinations are aligned with the CILOs. Internal examiners are required to fill-in an 'Examination Questions Evaluation' form and submit it to the HoD. During interviews, the academic staff indicated that each one of them has to submit the assessment results of each student in a matrix form to the HoD to highlight the percentage of attainment for each course ILO. However, the Panel did not find any evidence to show that the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes is collaborated by the external examiners. The Panel encourages the department's plan to ensure that alignment of assessment to course ILOs is also verified by external examiners.
- 4.5 The SER provides a graphic illustration of the internal moderation system at ASU which is applied to the BBA programme. Final and mid-term examination question papers are set by a course lecturer and reviewed by an appointed internal examiner. The mechanism was first adapted in 2013-2014 academic year during which the department formed the examination committee to handle the moderation process.

The Lecturer submits the examination paper at least 48 hours before the students sit for the examinations. The internal examiner has to ensure the relevance of the questions to the course and the appropriateness of the assessment tools to measure the achievement of the learning outcome and the distribution of marks. However, the Panel has concerns about the effectiveness of this mechanism. Practically, if changes are recommended to be addressed in less than 48 hours of the date of the examination. Moreover, examination papers will be exposed to a large number of people. The Panel notes that the current internal moderation system is effective only where courses are taught by multiple tutors. Furthermore, assignments and other assessment tools are not moderated systematically. The Panel suggests that as the department further implements the policy, it should assess the effectiveness of this mechanism. The internal examiner also reviews a sample of the marked scripts (including all failures, scripts with marks above 80%, and some randomly selected scripts) to ensure consistency of grading by course tutors. The Panel noted from the provided evidence that the mid-term examination is not moderated systematically. Moreover, assignments and other forms of assessments, which are allocated 50% of the total mark, are not subjected to moderation. The Panel recommends that ASU expand its internal moderation system to include all forms of assessment and revise the 48 hours given to moderate the examinations.

- 4.6 ASU has an *External Examiner Handbook* that seeks to regulate the external moderation process. The handbook provides information about the appointment of 'course external examiners' as well as 'award external examiners'. The Self-Evaluation Report states that the current system for external moderation is to send the external examiner at the Yarmouk University of Jordan the final examination question papers, the model answers and the course syllabus two weeks before the final due date. Staff interviewed, clarified the process by indicating that the Yarmouk University selects the faculty members to act as external examiners for the BBA courses. Then the Departmental Examination Committee discusses the external examiner feedback to take suitable actions. The Panel raised their concerns that this arrangement places an over-reliance on the Yarmouk University and does not allow enough time for the teaching staff to amend the final examination. The Panel noted that the College plans to introduce its modified external examiner policy by having two external examiners instead of one from two comparable universities; and approaching local, regional and international universities not only the Yarmouk University. The Panel recommends that the College should directly select and appoint its own external examiners from different local, regional and international universities. Moreover, the Panel urges the College to reconsider the two weeks period to ensure that sufficient time is given to staff members to accurately amend the examinations.

- 4.7 The Panel studied the provided course files and examined samples of students' coursework in different courses. The Panel notes with satisfaction the wide range of assessment tools used to assess students' work, knowledge and skills. The Panel noted that the staff enrich students learning experience by linking theory with practice and providing them with topics related to the local context. Interviews with students and staff confirmed that there are clear and transparent assessment criteria, marking scheme, and constructive feedback (written, oral and one to one basis) and that the assessment tools are well-aligned with the PILOs and CILOs; and are known to staff members and students. The Panel appreciates that students' assessed work is comparable to similar regional and international universities.
- 4.8 ASU has established a standard for ascertaining student achievement of course ILOs as 70% and above. The course files and interviews with the academic staff collaborated the claim in the SER that achievements during the past three years have always exceeded this threshold. The Panel examined a range of students' assessed work in various courses and concluded that the grades awarded reflected students' effort and ability. The Panel was provided with evidence of how a recently introduced 'indirect assessment matrix' has been used to demonstrate percentages of course ILOs that have been attained by students. The evaluation of grading is done by the internal and external examiners and by the Department Examination Committee to discuss and approve assessment results. After interviewing different academic staff, the Panel is satisfied that final grades are approved not only by course instructors but also by the HoD and the Dean to ensure that students are equally treated within the programme and across all programmes offered by the College. The level of students' achievements is also measured by distributing surveys to employers and alumni to gather information on the level of BBA students' achievements. Interviews conducted with alumni and employers showed an acceptable level of satisfaction on students' achievements. The Panel appreciates the systematic manner in which assessment results and grade distributions are scrutinized to assess BBA graduates' achievements.
- 4.9 The SER contains statistical data about admitted students, progression and graduation rates, and first destination of graduates from the inception of the programme in 2005 up to 2013. However, the data is not presented in a way that enables an accurate cohort analysis in terms of progression and retention. The data presented show that out of the 210 students who have graduated from the programme to date, 197 (representing close to 94%) completed within the minimum duration of four years. A comparison with some published statistics from selected universities shows a strong positive correlation in the progression rates. However, these analyses do not count for the large number of transferred students joining half way through the programme. The Panel therefore concludes, on the basis of the evidence provided, that in general the ratio of successful students to admitted

students and the length of study are comparable to those achieved on similar institutions internationally. Moreover, the Panel did not find any evidence of a systematic methodology to monitor retention, progression, graduation and dropout rates. Furthermore, there is no available data about the first destination of graduates. The Panel recommends that the College establish a methodology to regularly monitor retention, progression, graduation and dropout rates.

- 4.10 ASU has a Student Internship/Industrial Training Policy that guides the internship programme within the BBA programme. There is a clear statement of roles and responsibilities for the head of the Internship Unit, the academic training supervisor, and the industry supervisor. The document also contains clear guidelines for the registration and conduct of students during the internship programme as well as the arrangements for the assessment of students' performance. Students and alumni interviewed by the Panel were very satisfied with the internship programme. The Panel notes that all students who are eligible for internship have found placements in relevant organisations through the collective effort of both the students and the Internship Unit. Interviews with staff members illustrated how the College utilises the internship programme to build relationships with key employers and enhance students' employment prospects. The Panel appreciates the arrangements that are in place to monitor and assess the internship programme, and the support students are given during this period.
- 4.11 The BBA curriculum includes a three credit hour research project which has to be undertaken after completing 90 credit hours of study. The guidelines for the supervision of the research project, which include the responsibilities of both the student and the supervisor, are described in the *Undergraduate Dissertation Handbook*. The handbook also contains the registration and assessment requirements for the research project. The assessment comprises 10% for the proposal, 80% for the project, and a further 10% for self-reflection. Three examiners, including the supervisor, are required to assess each student's work. The students and alumni interviewed by the Panel were appreciative of the support they received from their supervisors. The Panel reviewed a sample of student research projects and found them to be of an acceptable standard. The Panel is satisfied about the current arrangements for conducting the research projects at BBA programme.
- 4.12 The Advisory Board for the BBA programme consists of two internal members and five external members from the public and private sectors, including discipline experts and employers. The terms of reference of the board are stated in the 'Programme Advisory Board Policy'. The Panel learned that the BBA programme Advisory Board was restructured in 2013 when ASU decided that each programme should have a representative in the University Advisory Board. The Panel confirmed during interviews with some members of the BBA programme Advisory Board that

meetings are held to consider issues relating to the revision of the BBA curriculum and the internship programme. The members also indicated that there is a collegial relationship between members of the board and the College. The Panel appreciates that the BBA programme advisory board is contributing effectively in improving the delivery of the programme and is capable of developing and fostering linkages between the College and the business world.

4.13 The Self-Evaluation Report states that ASU conducts two annual surveys to measure the level of satisfaction towards its graduates; one survey for employers and the other one for alumni. These surveys are analysed to provide an effective feedback to the quality of the programme and academic standards of its graduates. However, the Panel noted that these are not conducted systematically. The Self-Evaluation Report confirms the satisfaction of both alumni and employers as indicated by the recent survey analysis. During interview sessions with the employers and alumni, it was evident that employers have high level of satisfaction with the BBA graduates. The alumni expressed their satisfaction with what they learnt and highlighted that they managed to transfer what they learnt at ASU to their workplace. Interviewed employers made suggestions to enhance students' problem-solving skills and communication skills. The Panel appreciates the high level of employers and graduates satisfaction with the programme and its outcome; and recommends that the College develop and implement a mechanism to systematically measure their satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- The graduate attributes of the BBA programme are consistent with international standards, and are appropriately matched to the programme aims and programme intended learning outcomes.
- The efforts exerted by faculty members to benchmark the programme with local, regional and international institutions and integrate the standards that suit the local context to enhance the delivery of the programme.
- The assessment policy and procedures are transparent, consistently implemented and subject to regular reviews.
- Students' assessed work is comparable to similar regional and international universities.
- The systematic manner in which assessment results and grade distributions are scrutinized to assess BBA graduates' achievements.
- The arrangements that are in place to monitor and assess the internship programme, and the support students are given during this period.
- There is an active programme Advisory Board that participates effectively in improving the BBA programme and is capable of developing and fostering linkages between the College and the business world.

- Employers and graduates are highly satisfied with the programme and its outcome.

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

- extend the benchmarking activity to include assessment tools and the minimum percentage of the passing rate in BBA courses
- expand the internal moderation system to cover all forms of assessment in addition to mid-term and final examinations.
- directly select and appoint external examiners from different local, regional and international universities and reconsider the two weeks period to ensure that sufficient time is given to staff members to accurately amend the examinations
- establish a formal mechanism to regularly monitor retention, progression, graduation and dropout rates
- develop and implement a formal mechanism to systematically measure both employers and alumni satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes.

4.15 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.

- 5.1 The ASU management system comprises a range of policies and procedures that is mainly included in the recently developed Quality Assurance Manual to provide a 'one-stop shop.' Examples of existing policies and procedures include: Teaching and Learning and Assessment Strategy, Assessment and Feedback Policy, Staff Development Policy, Academic Staff Promotion Policy, Students at-Risk Policy and Programme Review Policy. The Panel met with some academic and administrative staff, including representatives from the department's QA Unit, who confirmed that these policies and procedures are applied effectively and well-communicated to both staff and students. During interview sessions, staff members were well-informed about these procedures and indicated their involvement in developing these procedures. The Panel appreciates that staff members are familiar with these policies and are involved in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
- 5.2 The BBA Programme is managed by a Programme Coordinator who is also the Head of the Department. The Self-Evaluation Report states that the structure supporting the Programme Coordinator to manage the programme consists of Department Council, Programme and Curriculum Review Committee, Examination Committee, Course Coordinators, and the Student Council, which has representation at all departmental meetings. Various internal bodies such as University, College and Department Councils are utilised to ensure that the responsibilities of all members involved in the delivery of the programme are executed in an effective manner and that leadership is provided where needed. The Panel met with some academic and administrative staff, including representatives from the QA Unit, who showed a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and were able to demonstrate many ways in which the policies and procedures are applied to enhance the quality of delivery of the BBA programme. The Panel appreciates that the BBA programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.
- 5.3 The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Center (AQQC) has an overall responsibility for ensuring that the programme adheres to the requirements of the ASU's quality assurance system. The SER demonstrates a number of ways in which the department ensures that the quality management system in relation to the BBA programme is monitored and evaluated. During interviews, the Panel learned that a comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual has been developed recently to enhance the delivery of all academic and administrative operations. The Panel further learned that quality assurance policy is operationalized at the College and

departmental levels *via* the college and departmental QA units, which are overseen by a University-wide QA coordinating group consisting of the QAAC director and the Colleges QA Coordinators, among others. For example, the responsibility of the departmental QA Unit is to ensure that the assessment methods are properly aligned to the programme and course intended learning outcomes. In addition, the programme is evaluated annually within the Department and through a formal review in four year intervals by the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee to assess its effectiveness and relevance. The Panel acknowledges that the quality assurance management system is clearly specified, implemented, monitored, and evaluated across the College.

- 5.4 As stated earlier, the QAAC at ASU has oversight responsibility for quality assurance and improvement at the University, and is responsible for ensuring proper alignment of quality assurance processes and monitoring the professional development of staff. During interview sessions, the Panel was informed that one of the primary objectives of the Centre is to inculcate a quality culture among both academic and administrative staff. The Panel was provided with evidence on QAAC conducting regular events and workshops to acquaint staff members with best practice approaches in teaching and learning and inviting facilitators from other higher education institutions in Bahrain to exchange good practices. Policies and procedures relating to quality assurance are made available on the university intranet for easy access by staff. Both academic and support staff interviewed showed a clear understanding of the quality management arrangements and their role in ensuring the quality of the provision. The Panel appreciates the commitment of the ASU staff in ensuring the quality of delivering the BBA programme.
- 5.5 The Self-evaluation Report states that ASU has a procedure for the development of new programmes. In terms of the procedure, proposals for introducing new programmes go through internal and external approvals. The former starts with the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee (PCRC), after which the proposal is presented to the College and then to the University to get their approval. Once approved, the external procedure starts by submitting the approved proposal to the HEC so that the new programme is licenced. The Panel notices that no new programmes have been introduced in the last three years. The Panel is satisfied that the procedure ASU has put in place for the development and approval of new programmes is adequate but encourages the university to clarify the trigger factors for introducing new programmes.
- 5.6 The SER stated that at the end of each academic year, an internal self-evaluation report for the BBA programme that includes recommendations for the improvement of the programme and courses is developed and submitted to the QACC. The SER demonstrates a number of ways in which the Department reviews and evaluates the

BBA programme. These include regular course evaluation reports, student feedback, student satisfaction surveys, alumni and employer surveys, regular departmental council and programme team meetings, external examination and moderation, and a functioning programme Advisory Board. During interview sessions, the faculty members explained the mechanism in place to revise the course specifications, and the cycle to approve the suggestions and changes to the courses. The cycle involves the Programme Coordinator and the Department Council to approve the changes to the course and align it to programme aims and ILOs. The Panel met with students and alumni who confirmed that they were able to provide feedback on various aspects relating to the quality of the provision. The academic staff also confirmed that the process of student evaluation has led to many improvements in the teaching of specific courses. The Panel notes the annual programme review, and recommends that the Department develop a clear follow-up mechanism to ensure that recommended enhancements are implemented. Moreover, the Panel encourages the Department to revise its programme review mechanism to align its procedure tightly with the ASU curriculum change procedures as specified in the Quality Assurance Manual.

- 5.7 The Self-Evaluation Report clarifies that in terms of the ASU Programme Review Policy, the Programme and Curriculum Review Committee (PCRC) is responsible for reviewing the BBA programme in a four year cycle. The review process requires the PCRC to gather feedback from teaching staff, students and other stakeholders such as employers and alumni of each batch to ascertain the relevance and currency of the programme, and to assure alignment of the PILOs to the College vision and mission statements. The Panel was informed during the interviews that the last periodic review was conducted in 2013 in preparation for this external review in 2014. The Panel appreciates the tenacity with which the programme is reviewed.
- 5.8 ASU conducts surveys of its students and graduates, as well as employers of its graduates. Evidence was provided during the site visit of some recent surveys and subsequent department meetings that have been held to consider the findings of the surveys. Whilst students' feedback on courses and teaching and learning is sought systematically at the end of each semester, employers and alumni surveys are not conducted regularly or systematically. Interviews with employers clarified that some of the notable findings from the recent surveys have been a perception by employers that the BBA graduates lacked professional practice opportunities. The Panel was pleased to find that steps were taken to address this shortcoming by including guest speakers from industry and field trips to businesses as part of the teaching and learning methods in the programme. The Panel, however, did not find any evidence of a mechanism that is used to systematically analyse stakeholder surveys to inform decision making. The Panel recommends that ASU adapt a more formal procedure in

analysing and responding to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to stakeholders on actions taken to address any identified issues.

- 5.9 ASU has a Staff Development Centre which oversees the professional development of the academic staff and is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of staff training programmes. In addition, there is an Academic Staff Development Policy that stipulates the basis for an academic staff development budget and specifies some development initiatives and activities that are supported as part of academic staff professional development. These include providing financial assistance for conference attendance and financial support and release time for academic staff to enhance their qualifications or undertake other scholarly activity. During the site visit, the Panel visited the staff development unit at ASU. The Panel learned that the unit ensures continuous development plan is in place for all faculty members. This is achieved through annual workshops, and participation in professional training, and signing memorandum of understanding with professional bodies. The Unit keeps electronic records of all faculty members who attended the professional development activities. The Staff Development Policy is translated to a yearly plan along with its allocated budget. The Staff Development Policy encourages the participation in conferences, sabbatical leave, study leave and other development activities. A number of the interviewed academic staff confirmed that they have benefited from the staff development programme. The Panel acknowledges the arrangements in place to provide professional development opportunities for faculty members. The appraisal system used also includes a section on the staff training needs. However, the Panel did not see evidence of a formal process to link the professional development needs of academic staff to the actual activities conducted. The Panel recommends that the Department develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process of all faculty members to their professional development needs.
- 5.10 The Department relies on internal and external stakeholders to gather intelligence about the local labour market from its dedicated staff members and the external members of the programme Advisory Board, many of whom have several years of experience in the local labour market. In addition, ASU has links through employers and its alumni to market intelligence. However, the Panel was not provided with evidence of a systematic scoping of the labour market. The Panel recommends that the College develop and implement a formal mechanism for continuous scoping of the labour market needs.
- 5.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There is a set of defined policies and procedures that staff members are familiar with and are involved in the development of those that are relevant to their duties.
- The BBA programme is managed in a manner that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership.
- Staff members are committed to deliver the BBA programme with quality.
- There is an effective programme review system that has led to major improvements in the curriculum.

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

- adapt a more formal procedures to collect, analyse and respond to stakeholder surveys, and provide timely feedback to them on actions taken to address the identified issues
- develop and implement a formal mechanism to link the annual performance review process of all faculty members to their professional development needs
- develop and implement a formal mechanism for continuous scoping of the labour market needs.

5.13 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**.

6. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/QQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme offered by the College of Administrative Sciences of the Applied Science University.