



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

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

**Bachelor of Business
Faculty of Business
Bahrain Polytechnic
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 22-24 September 2014

HC034-C1-R034

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Acronyms

APR	Annual Programme Review
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
BBUS	Bachelor of Business
BPQF	Bahrain Polytechnic Qualifications Framework
CAC	Curriculum Advisory Committee
CEC	Career and Employment Centre
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CTTL	Certificate in Tertiary Training and Learning
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
IT	Information Technology
LLC	Library Learning Centre
MIS	Management Information Systems
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAD	Programme Approval Document
PEP	Performance Enhancement Process
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes

QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QMAP	Quality Measurement Analysis and Planning
QMS	Quality Management System
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training-Bahrain
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SMT	Senior Management Team
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

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 1, 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 Bahrain Polytechnic

A Programmes-within-College review of the Faculty of Business at Bahrain Polytechnic (BP) was conducted by the DHR of the QQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 22-24 September 2014 for the academic programmes offered by the college, these are: the Bachelor of Business (BBUS) and the Bachelor of International Logistics Management (BILM).

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

BP was notified by the DHR/QQA in October 2013 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College reviews of its Faculty of Business with the site visit taking place on 22-24 September 2014. In preparation for the review, BP conducted its self-evaluation of its two Programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date in May 2014.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic fields of Business, International Logistics Management, and who have experience in external programme quality reviews. The Panel comprised three 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 the BP will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its Bachelor of Business. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence it is the right of BP to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, BP is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to BP 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 in the Bachelor of Business programme.

1.3 Overview of the Faculty of Business

The Faculty of Business was established in 2010. It comprises the School of Business: which offers the Bachelor of Business, and the School of Logistics and Maritime Studies which offers the Bachelor of International Logistics Management. In the academic year 2013-2014, the number of students enrolled in the Faculty were 1100. The number of academic and administrative staff totaled 65. The School of Business has 51 academic staff supported by a management team that comprises a Head of School, five Programme Managers and a small team of administrative staff. In addition to Faculty support, the School also avails of significant support from other Polytechnic departments, such as the Faculty of Humanities, Registry, Academic Development, Students Services, Human Resources and Finance.

1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Business Programme

The Bachelor of Business (BBUS) programme is offered by the School of Business which was established in July 2009. The student population has grown rapidly in the first four years to a peak of 980 students, which reflects the popularity of business as area of study amongst school-leavers. In the academic year 2013-2014, there were

over 800 students. The original Bachelor of Business curriculum was purchased from the AACSB accredited business school at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), which has a pedagogical ethos similar to that at Bahrain Polytechnic. Since then, a number of incremental changes, as part of the annual programme review process, have been implemented to better contextualize it to Bahraini requirements. More recently, the Bachelor of Business has been subject to a significant periodic review at the end of its first full delivery cycle to reassess its validity and inform its future direction. Consequently, some structural changes to the programme will be adopted as part of the School's Academic Year 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). To date, 342 graduates have completed the BBUS programme.

1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

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

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 Bachelor of Business Programme has a Programme Approval Document (PAD) which outlines the programme aims, intended learning outcomes, assessment strategy, as well as the rationale for providing the programme. As indicated in the PAD, the BBUS programme aims to prepare graduates for professional and or business practice with broad base of business knowledge, English Language skills as well as skills to be life-long learners. During interviews with senior management, the Panel learned that the BBUS programme was developed to address the goals of Vision 2030 of having work-ready graduates equipped with employability skills. The Panel appreciates that a clear academic framework is in place outlining the broad aims of the BBUS programme and how they contribute to the achievement of the Institution's mission.
- 2.2 The BBUS curriculum is an extension of the three year Programme purchased and contextualized from the Auckland University of Technology. While extending the three year programme to a four year programme, Bahrain Polytechnic developed its own Qualification Framework, referenced to the Scottish and New Zealand systems, categorizing the courses in the Programme in levels (5, 6, and 7) with respect to their hierarchy of learning and content. The curriculum comprises 480 credit hours (each ten learning hours equating one credit) to be completed over four years and is organized to provide academic progression year-on-year and course-by-course. The BBUS Programme and its majors have the required knowledge and skills, with a sound balance between theory and practice. The Industry Project with 60 credits and the internship together with the projects assigned in courses enable the students to acquire the intended practical skills which are relevant to employability. The Panel appreciates that the curriculum provides appropriate academic progression and a sound balance between theory and practice.
- 2.3 The BBUS curriculum in its first two years provides courses common to all of its students during which they acquire common, appropriate knowledge and skills, whereas during the 3rd and 4th years, students specialize in one of the four majors: these are Management, Marketing, Finance and Accounting. Furthermore, the BBUS syllabus is well documented and is available on the SharePoint web site of the Bahrain Polytechnic. The breadth, depth and relevance of the syllabus for the BBUS programme was initially guided by the degree Programme purchased from AUT Business School in New Zealand which was integrated into the BP Quality Framework and appropriately contextualized with feedback from the Curriculum Advisory Committee (CAC). In its interviews with the teaching staff and students,

the Panel noted the participation of industry professionals in the teaching on the BBUS programme and the use of contextualized case-studies. The alignment with professional practice is further supported by the accreditation of the Institute of Leadership and Management, ACCA and the Digital Marketing Institute. The Panel appreciates that the syllabus is well-documented, with appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and research findings.

- 2.4 While the Panel acknowledges that the BBUS programme aims to have professional and enterprising graduates with attributes based on work-ready practical skills, the Panel is of the view that a Bachelor of Business programme should equip its students with numerical skills to enable them to be more efficient learners in higher level courses, such as Accounting and Quantitative Research Methods. Furthermore, the addition of one more Economics course would enable the students to have a sound base in Economics which is very relevant for Business programmes graduates. During interviews, the Panel was informed that a Polytechnic-wide review team is currently investigating the enhancement of the mathematics provision. Additional mathematics courses in Foundation and in the early years of the degree is currently being explored. The Panel recommends that the School of Business, in the programme's next review cycle, include Mathematics, Statistics and one more course in Economics in the BBUS curriculum, which will contribute to the generic build-up of Business Programme's graduates.
- 2.5 The BBUS Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are specified in the Programme Approval Document and are categorized into three domains; these are: 'general and transferable skills', 'knowledge and understanding' and 'applied knowledge and understanding'. Graduate profiles for each major area of study: Management, Marketing, Accounting, Banking and Finance are also stated. While the Programme ILOs have been, in general, developed appropriately, the Panel suggests, for the third domain of 'applied knowledge and understanding', that the programme team elaborates further on 'demonstrating competence in their major fields of study' for each major area of the Programme. Intended learning outcomes are also expressed at the course level and are clearly stated in the course descriptor document. The Panel notes that, as part of the annual programme review, the programme and course learning outcomes are revised, if necessary, to reflect recent updates, such as the revised BP Mission.
- 2.6 The course Intended learning outcomes are documented in course descriptors and are classified into: generic or transferrable skills; knowledge and understanding; and practice. The Panel finds that these learning outcomes are appropriate to the course level and credits outlined in course descriptors. During interviews, the Panel learned that the course ILOs are set in line with the BPQF to ensure that they are appropriate to the aims and level of the course. The Panel was also informed that the programme

has participated in the Pilot NQF during which 53 courses were mapped by analyzing their course learning outcomes and related assessments. The Panel notes that only two of those courses failed to map to the correct NQF level and have since been revised accordingly. From provided evidence and site visit interviews, the Panel noted that the School of Business is well aware of the significance of mapping course ILOs against the programme ILOs as a tool for achieving the efficiency of their curriculum. The Panel appreciates that course learning outcomes appropriate to the aims and levels of the course are in place and are appropriately documented. However, the Panel is of the view that explicit ILOs for each major need to be developed and mapped against the courses offered in the respective major to ensure that all of the majors' ILOs are covered by the courses in that field and are not repeated more than required. In its SER, the BBUS programme acknowledges the need to clarify the relative contribution of each course to the majors' learning outcomes. The Panel concurs and recommends that academic staff be provided with further training on the mapping of CILOs to the BBUS Majors' PILOs to further enhance the contribution of the curriculum to the achievement of BP's Mission.

- 2.7 The BBUS curriculum includes an Industry Project which takes place in the second semester of the last year of study. This Project provides the opportunity for students to 'apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the Bachelor of Business' and to 'gain experience of work practices' as well as 'reflecting on their professional and personal skills in the workplace'. This project is aligned directly with learning pertaining to 'general and transferable skills' and 'practice applied knowledge and understanding'. From site visit interviews and provided documentation, it was evident to the Panel that the Industry Project is well designed, monitored and assessed and enables students to attain the Programme ILOs. Besides the Industry Project, the Panel notes that other work-integrated learning opportunities that are embedded into the Programme curriculum (such as assignments, case studies, internships and fieldtrips), contribute towards industry involvement and enhancing employability skills. The Panel appreciates that work-based learning contributes to the attainment of the Programme ILOs, and that the practical skills gained by the students enable them to adapt to the working environment quite smoothly.
- 2.8 The BBUS teaching philosophy is guided by a number of institutional documents, including the Curriculum Development Principles & Guidelines, E-Learning Strategy and PBL Project Plan. During the site visit, it was evident to the Panel that a wide range of teaching methods are employed in the delivery of the BBUS; these include: conventional lectures with a maximum class size of 20; group tutorials; videos; case studies; and workshops and discussion groups. In addition, MOODLE VLE is used to support students in their academic activities including course materials, assignments as well as providing feedback on students' work. Independent learning hours are specified in the course descriptors and many courses are supported by e-

learning resources (Intuition). In its interviews with staff members, the Panel learned that the teaching philosophy at the Bahrain Polytechnic is focused on a problem-based learning approach and student-centered education which are linked to teaching methods and course ILOs. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed their satisfaction with the range of teaching methods and found them effective in supporting their PBL experience. The Panel appreciates that a wide and innovative range of teaching methods are employed to ensure the attainment of the course learning outcomes. The Panel also notes with appreciation that the teaching effectiveness of academic staff is enhanced through their enrollment in the Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning Programme (CTTL) which appropriately prepares them for the BP teaching philosophy.

2.9 The Faculty of Business has a set of well-documented assessment policies and guidelines for implementation. Policies on assessment are available on the SharePoint website for staff, and are provided in the Student Handbook as well as on MOODLE for the students. A variety of formative and summative assessment methods are used such as class tests, assignments, presentations, examinations, practical business projects and research projects. Careful consideration is given to the pre- and post-moderation of each assignment to ensure that examinations and tasks are fair, valid, reliable and appropriate for the relevant level. An appeal policy outlining the rules and regulations for students to appeal their grades is in place and is well known by the students. During interviews with teaching staff, the Panel learned that students receive a marking rubric with their assessment task(s) and prompt feed-back on their assessments which could also be submitted through MOODLE. The Panel noted with appreciation that the academic staff adhere to the policy of providing effective feedback on assessments within 10 working days. Feedback is provided by teaching staff irrespective of whether the submission is electronic or a hard copy and that they work through the exam papers with the students in the class. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed their satisfaction with the clear assessment policies and the prompt feedback they received. The Panel appreciates that the BBUS programme has a set of well-documented assessment policies and guidelines for implementation that are made available to all stakeholders.

2.10 In coming to its conclusion regarding The Learning Programme, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- A clear academic framework is in place outlining the broad aims of the BBUS programme and how they contribute to the achievement of the Institution's mission
- The curriculum provides appropriate academic progression and a sound balance between theory and practice

- The syllabus is well-documented, with appropriate references to current and recent professional practice and research findings.
- The course learning outcomes are appropriate to the aims and levels of the courses and are mapped to the programme learning outcomes.
- Work-based learning is embedded into the curriculum and contributes to the attainment of employability attributes of the graduates.
- A wide and innovative range of teaching methods are employed to ensure the attainment of the course learning outcomes.
- The teaching effectiveness of academic staff is enhanced through their enrollment in the Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning Programme (CTTL) which appropriately prepares them for the BP teaching philosophy.
- Effective and prompt feedback on assessments is provided to students.
- A set of well-documented assessment policies and guidelines are in place for implementation and are made available to all stakeholders.

2.11 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the School of Business should:

- include, in the Programme's next review cycle, mathematics, statistics and one more course in economics in the BBUS curriculum, which will contribute to the generic build-up of Business Programmes graduates
- provide academic staff with further training on the mapping of CILOs to the BBUS Majors' PILOs to further enhance the contribution of the curriculum to the achievement of BP's Mission.

2.12 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 The Bahrain Polytechnic has a clear admission policy according to which, a student to be admitted to the first year must have (a) a high-school leaving certificate; (b) an average score of 70% or more cumulative over final two years of high school; (c) evidence of English levels equivalent to at least IELTS 4.00. Entry Criteria to the Bachelor of Business Programme requires a satisfactory level of mathematics and English levels. For mathematics, it is required that the students pass the 'Mathematics Selection Test' and have an IELTS 5.0 or above as English requirement. Students who do not meet these criteria are required to undertake Bahrain Polytechnic's foundation programme. The Panel finds the admission requirements to be appropriate to the level and type of the programme. Students and staff interviewed by the Panel indicated that the admission policy is adequately communicated, *via* the Student Handbook, SharePoint and Staff Handbook, and is reviewed every three years. The Panel notes with appreciation that an appropriate admission policy is in place and is adequately communicated to stakeholders. However, in light of the Panel's recommendation to increase the number of Mathematics courses in the Programme (see section 2.4), the Panel is of the view that the entry standards for mathematics will need to be enhanced in the programme's next review cycle. The Panel acknowledges that the School has already considered this issue and is seeking to increase the mathematics entry standard and to provide more support for mathematics in the first two years of study.
- 3.2 The appropriateness of the students profile to the BBUS programme is supported by the high course pass rates and the overall progression achievement rates. During interviews, the Panel learned that students admitted to the Foundation Programme are supported in Mathematics and English to enable them to enter to the first year of the BBUS Programme. Students entering the programme through the Foundation Programme were interviewed by the Panel and did not express any difficulties in completing their courses. Student numbers given for the academic year 2012-2013, is 380 for the first two years and 580 for the Major Areas, adding up to 960 students. The Panel finds the number of students appropriate to the programme's available resources; particularly as programme is moving to an annualized intake to a steady state of 600 students. During the touring of the facilities, the Panel was accompanied by members of the Students Council who organized the tour and acted as a guide throughout the 90 minutes session. The Panel also had the opportunity to conduct structured as well as *ad hoc* interviews with BBUS students. The Panel notes with appreciation, the impressive level of motivation, engagement, as well as the

communication skills of these students, which the Panel views as an indicator of the appropriateness of the students profile.

- 3.3 The Faculty of Business is administered by a Dean, and the School of Business by the Head of School who has oversight of all aspects of operations management within the School. The Head of School is assisted by five Programme Managers, one of which is responsible from 1st and 2nd year courses, while the other four are responsible from the four major areas of Management, Marketing, Accounting, and Banking and Finance. Tutors report to their Programme Managers who are also the first point in the evaluation of the Performance Evaluation Process. Apart from the above staff, the Faculty has a number of administrative/academic staff as well. At Faculty level, there is the Faculty Operations Manager (with two administrative staff), Research Fellow, four other managers (Academic Quality, Flexible Delivery, Short Courses and Works and Integrated Learning). The Head of Business School is assisted by a Workplace Coordinator with his/her two administrators. The duties and responsibilities of both academic and administrative staff are clearly indicated in the Institution's By-Laws and also in the Faculty Handbook. Furthermore, academic committees of the Faculty and the Business Programme, namely the Business Programme Committee, the Business Programme Curriculum Advisory Committee and the Faculty Board have clear lines of responsibilities, regular meetings with set agendas and prompt decisions recorded appropriately. All committee meetings minutes are available on SharePoint for all staff members to access. The Panel appreciates the clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the Bachelor of Business Programme. However, the Panel finds that the number of meetings and committees, both at the Faculty's and School's level, introduces some bureaucracy. The Panel is of the view that the Faculty's organizational chart may benefit from being reviewed to enhance the management efficiency of both the Faculty and the School of Business. In its SER, the School of Business indicates that the management structure for the Faculty of Business is currently being reviewed to ensure it serves the programme's needs in the next stage of the Faculty's development. This was confirmed during site visit interviews with senior management. The Panel concurs and encourages the Faculty to conduct this review in light of the evaluation outcomes of the Faculty's first full cycle of degree programmes.
- 3.4 The School of Business has 43 staff members including the Head of School and five Programme Managers. Six of the teaching staff have only Bachelor's degree, but are currently completing a Master's degree, while 31 have Master's degree in addition to six staff with Ph.D. degrees. The Panel notes that most of the teaching staff have professional qualifications or significant industry experience. In addition, the majority of staff have completed the Polytechnic's Certificate of Tertiary Training and Learning. In the academic year of 2013-2014, the student to teaching staff ratio

was calculated to be 1:17, which the Panel finds appropriate. From site visit interviews, the Panel notes with appreciation that the teaching staff are motivated, enthusiastic and demonstrate good pedagogic knowledge and skills, with a positive attitude towards improvement. Students interviewed by the Panel indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of learning and that the teaching staff are supportive and accessible because of the favorable student-staff ratio and the open door policy. According to the Programme Annual Review for Academic Year 2012-2013, there is still a need of 10 full-time teaching staff in the BBUS programme; with Finance and Accounting as major risk areas. This concern was echoed by students during site visit interviews. While the Panel acknowledges the recent recruitment of an Accounting teaching staff, the Panel recommends that the School of Business expedite the recruitment of more teaching staff with the necessary expertise to support delivery of the Accounting and Banking & Finance majors.

- 3.5 The School of Business recognizes the need to encourage all staff to obtain appropriate professional certifications and memberships in addition to their academic degrees. In its interviews with senior management, it was highlighted that among the School's priorities are the investment in professional development and the gradual Bahrainization of academic staff, to ensure the programme's sustainability. Staff members interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they have attended regional and international conferences and training workshops. Upon examining the School's research output, however, the Panel is of the view that the teaching staff need to be more involved in research activities, including the publication of research articles. The Panel recommends that the School of Business develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to encourage the teaching staff to improve their academic qualifications and become more research-active.
- 3.6 There are clear procedures for staff recruitment to the BBUS programme. The recruitment of teaching and administrative staff is currently carried out by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) in cooperation with the Faculty of Business and the HR Directorate. The Panel heard consistently, in different interviews, about the difficulties encountered by BP in recruiting academic staff since the CSB assumed responsibility for recruitment in 2012. For example, the recent change in job description necessitates that teaching staff have a minimum of a 'postgraduate degree', as opposed to a 'Bachelor's degree with industry experience' prior to 2012. In addition, there are long lead-times between recommending the applicant for hire and an offer being made. Moreover, the remuneration offered by the CSB results in a high proportion of offers being declined by applicants. While some interim measures have been undertaken by BP to mitigate the recruitment risk, the Panel encourages the School to explore sustainable measures to ensure this challenge is appropriately addressed.

- 3.7 A new process of staff appraisal entitled 'Performance Enhancement Process' (PEP) was introduced in December 2013, and samples of staff evaluation forms were made available to the Panel. The Appraisal Form covers all the core functions of a teaching staff, namely the teaching effectiveness, research and community engagement. A peer review as well as student course evaluation surveys are considered in the appraisal process. The Form is monitored by the Head of School and the Dean and is used to identify areas for professional development. There are well-established induction processes at the Bahrain Polytechnic for all newly recruited staff. These include a general induction about Bahrain Polytechnic for all staff, in addition to a Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning for teaching staff. Newly recruited teaching staff interviewed by the Panel confirmed these induction processes. The Panel appreciates that appropriate induction processes are consistently implemented for all new staff in the BBUS Programme. The promotion for the teaching staff at the School of Business is from 'assistant tutor' to 'tutor' and to 'senior tutor' in light of academic performance and recommendation of the Head of School. The Panel notes that a formal promotion and retention policies are not yet in place; however, the Panel was informed in interviews that the new PEP process will be used to identify high performing staff for potential incentives. The Panel recommends that the Faculty of Business develop and implement appropriate promotion and retention policies to deal with this critical area of talent management as intellectual capital is the cornerstone of the academic programme.
- 3.8 The BBUS is supported by two major Management Information Systems (MIS), the Banner Student and SharePoint. The Banner Student is used mainly in registration and enrolment, saving academic records, programme planning and tracking students attendance. During the touring of facilities, the Panel learned that access to the Banner system is controlled so that each user can only access the information pertinent to their decision making, whether that is a student, staff member, or manager. The Panel was also informed that the BP is in the process of upgrading the Banner MIS to version 9. Academic staff interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they are trained on the use of Banner as part of their induction training programme. MS SharePoint software is mainly for teaching staff for sharing class materials, operational manuals, staff handbooks, Quality Management System (QMS) policies and procedures, and meeting minutes. During the site visit the Panel was given a demonstration of the SharePoint system, including sample course files and QMS. During Panel interviews the Panel was assured of adequate backup IT systems, both on campus as well as off-campus. The Panel appreciates the use of MIS to support the programme and ensure the sustainability of its information resources. However, the Panel is of the view that the Faculty needs to enhance the use of these systems in producing analytical reports, such as cohort analysis, that support decision and policy making. In its SER, the BP has recognized the need to streamline its MIS architecture to meet its growing information and data requirements, particularly in

light of the rapid growth over the past few years. Tenders have been issued for this purpose. The Panel concurs and encourages BP to expedite the procurement of the new MIS systems.

- 3.9 Bahrain Polytechnic has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the security of the learners' information and accuracy of the results. These include the security and maintenance of student files. Through the BANNER software, appropriate security protocols are used in managing the student records. Technical support is given by the IT Department of the Bahrain Polytechnic which is also responsible for taking daily back-up of the system and store it outside the premises. The management of student grades, from the time that a grade is captured for the first time until it is published is in line with acceptable practice. During its interviews with teaching staff, the Panel was informed that the grades for all assessments are recorded in BANNER by teaching staff and once the results are ratified by the Academic Board only the Registrar could update the student records. Disclosure of any student information is carefully controlled by the Registrar. Students interviewed by the Panel had adequate understanding of their rights regarding grade reviews and the underlying policies that guided this process. The Panel acknowledges that appropriate policies and procedures are consistently implemented to ensure the security of learner records and accuracy of results
- 3.10 Bahrain Polytechnic currently shares the Isa Town campus with University of Bahrain; however, a new campus design is at its final stages. A number of issues regarding suitable venues and office space and the lack of availability of computer laboratories etc. are highlighted in the Annual Programme Review document for 2012-2013. The Panel is of the view that some of the issues are operational in nature, and therefore solvable when raised, and that the envisaged campus development plan, which is yet to be implemented, would alleviate some of these pressures. During the site visit the Panel toured the campus and noted the availability of an adequate number of classrooms with adequate audio-visuals, PBL workshops and seminar rooms for its current student numbers. The Panel finds these facilities to be comparable to any such facilities on other campuses internationally. The library, in particular, is well designed and has quite spaces for students to study, areas where group discussions can take place without disturbing other students and general conversational areas. There are sufficient business journal collections, databases including Proquest, Emerald, EBSCO Host, Harvard Business Review as well as local and regional business journals. Moreover, BP has recently adopted Ebrary as a virtual library solution. The Panel notes with appreciation that the Library is managed by a knowledgeable and experienced librarian with a Master's degree in Library Science which is an asset for the programme. The Panel also notes that the student survey shows 83% satisfaction rate with the facilities and 90% with the

equipment and technology. This was confirmed by students interviewed by the Panel.

- 3.11 The Panel notes with appreciation that Polytechnic has also built a state-of-the-art Library Learning Centre (LLC) which includes a 'writing' centre, to develop students' written language skills. Moreover, the LLC provides access to integrated technology, including assistive technology, gaming; touch screens that meet the needs of the Bahrain Polytechnic Community. WIFI is available across campus for students and staff. During interviews, the Panel learned that the Faculty has established an entrepreneurship provision located at the Riyadat Centre in A'Ali so that students can be adapted into a business incubation environment. The Panel was also informed that the Faculty is currently exploring the establishment of a specialist Financial Analytics Laboratory with state-of-the-art information platforms such as Bloomberg. The Panel acknowledges the Faculty's efforts to explore and implement further initiatives to enhance the BBUS students' learning experience.
- 3.12 Bahrain Polytechnic has well established procedures to track the utilization of its resources. Student information is followed through the BANNER software, timetabling by the Celcat, Library Management System by Millennium, Virtual Learning Environment by MOODLE and Management Information System by MS SharePoint. All general classrooms and laboratory-based rooms usage can be obtained from the Timetabling System and are usually displayed on classroom doors. The IT Department tracks the internet, telephone and printing in detail, and this data is used to control usage. There is a continuous evaluation of the usage of physical and digital resources. The Panel appreciates the availability of an efficient tracking system that follows the utilization of resources and inform improvement decision-making.
- 3.13 Bahrain Polytechnic has a well-established student support system in terms of library, laboratories, e-learning, guidance and support care. While Student Services Department provides pastoral services to students, mentors and Library Learning Centre (LLC) provide academic assistance to students at risk. The LLC provides one to one service in English Language and Writing Skills and general academic support. In its interviews with students, the Panel was informed that the LLC runs a PASS programme with senior peers tutoring students in need of academic assistance on a drop in-basis. The Panel also learned that the LLC organizes workshops to students on a number of topics some of which are time management, reading and spelling strategies, and paraphrasing. The Bahrain Polytechnic has arrangements for its disabled students such as giving extra time in exams while it needs to improve its infrastructure to rehabilitate them more efficiently. Students are also supported in computer use via the ICT Helpdesk which provides help with issues regarding login, email, mobile access to email, or MOODLE. Wireless access is subcontracted and

monitored efficiently. Moreover, the Career and Employment Centre offers a drop in service for students looking for help in managing their career planning and skill development. During discussions with students general satisfaction was expressed with the type and quality of student support services. The Panel appreciates that a well-established and effective student support system is available to enhance the students' learning experience.

- 3.14 Orientation of the newly admitted students including the transfer students is organized by the Student Services Directorate and is scheduled in advance of every semester. The orientation is conducted over 2-3 days during which the students are introduced to teaching staff, mentors and attend a number of workshops on rules and regulations and conduct of behaviour at the Bahrain Polytechnic. They are also given their student ID numbers and cards and shown how to log on the Polytechnic computer systems to obtain their timetables. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they were provided with a Student Handbook containing information on class attendance requirements, services and facilities, mentoring as well as health and safety. The Panel acknowledges that appropriate arrangements are implemented for new and transfer students.
- 3.15 Bahrain Polytechnic has well-established policies and procedures to provide an early warning of students at risk in order to provide them the needed academic support. The students at risk policy is all-encompassing and includes items such as risk associated with academic progress, personal and psychological issues, health/safety related issues, financial issues and social/behavioural issues. The students at risk are identified from their attendance records at the BANNER. Tutors are also expected to be pro-active and follow up with students that are absent. In general, students are allowed to be absent from class for 20% of the time due to occasional illness and other absences. Furthermore, students who could not get the required grades to be successful are recorded as 'in probation' and such students are given reduced workloads until they succeed. Staff are made aware of students at risk *via* a summarized staff information document detailing reasons for at risk students such as lack of academic progress and irregular class attendance. The Panel views this information document as good practice as it specifically guides staff on how to identify such students, details some examples of types of support that could be offered (depending on the circumstances) and then sets out the entire process by means of a flow diagram. In addition, it also identifies the typical at risk categories in conjunction with the typical interventions that could be enlisted in a table format in the information document. During interviews, the teaching staff confirmed that they receive information on how to identify the students at risk and how to refer them to the correct support. Students at risk are required to attend weekly sessions with their learning advisor for one to one tutoring and may also have to attend peer tutoring. The Panel notes that out of 33 students at the Business Programme who were

identified at risk, only seven of them required further support in the following semester. The Panel appreciates that effective institutional structures and support mechanisms are implemented to assist at risk students.

3.16 Bahrain Polytechnic has a number of arrangements to provide a suitable learning environment to students in their studies and personal lives. The Directorate of Student Services runs social, awareness and cultural events all throughout the academic year. The elected Student Association also contributes to these events. Career and Employment Centre offers a range of services some which are: workshops on how to write CV, organize career days inviting firms to introduce various professions and provide recruitment opportunities. Library Learning Centre provides opportunities for informal learning through initiatives like American Corner which offers events like 'Bahraini Business Women Mentorship, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. The Health and Wellness Centre on the other hand with its two personal trainers offers weekly group fitness classes. The Centre has a fully equipped gymnasium, indoor basketball courts, a mini gymnasium for ladies. During interviews, students were complimentary regarding the support systems and initiatives implemented by BP to improve their study experience. The Panel appreciates that the learning environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning.

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

- An appropriate admission policy is consistently implemented, adequately communicated to staff and students and regularly reviewed.
- The students are motivated, engaged, with impressive communication skills.
- There are clear lines of accountability with regard to the management of the Programme.
- The teaching staff are motivated, enthusiastic and demonstrate good pedagogic knowledge and skills, with a wide range of international experience.
- Appropriate induction processes are consistently implemented for all new staff in the BBUS Programme.
- A range of Management Information Systems are used support the programme and ensure the sustainability of its information resources.
- The Library is managed by a knowledgeable and experienced Director with a Master's Degree in Library Science which is an asset for the programme.
- A state-of-the-art Library Learning Centre (LLC) provides comprehensive support to students across a wide range of areas.
- An efficient tracking system, with well established procedures, is implemented to track the utilization of resources and inform improvement decision-making.
- A well-established and effective student support system is available to enhance the students' learning experience.

- Effective institutional structures and support mechanisms are implemented to assist students at risk of academic failure.
- The learning environment is conducive to expanding the student experiences and knowledge through informal learning.

3.18 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the School of Business should:

- expedite the recruitment of more teaching staff with the necessary expertise to support delivery of the Accounting and Banking & Finance majors
- develop and implement appropriate mechanisms to encourage the teaching staff to improve their academic qualifications and become more research-active
- develop and implement formal promotion and retention policies to deal with this critical area of talent management as intellectual capital is the cornerstone of the academic programme.

3.19 **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 BBUS programme has clear aims as well as graduate attributes for each of the major areas of specialization which are explicitly stated in the Programme Approval Document. The intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each course are also clearly documented and mapped to graduate attributes in the form of a matrix. In addition, all ILOs are mapped to the generic grid-level descriptors of the BPQF. In its interviews with the programme team, the Panel learned that the programme has participated in the pilot mapping project of the QQA National Qualifications Framework, the outcomes of which reinforced the validity of assessments and learning outcomes. The Panel notes that individual course descriptors outline the intended learning outcomes and assessments for each course. These mappings are also provided to students in the course specification document. Upon examining the PAD and course descriptors, the Panel noted that a range of assessment methods, both formative and summative, are implemented to determine the achievement of the learning outcomes. The Panel appreciates that the programme graduate attributes are clearly stated and that there is a link between the ILOs, types of assessments and graduate profile. The Panel acknowledges the programme's recent efforts to link ILOs to employability skills and encourages the School of Business to expand the range of indirect assessment of graduate attributes as more cohorts are graduated in the upcoming years.
- 4.2 The SER notes that 'current benchmarking practice within the School tends to be focused on trends in curricula to ensure the programmes maintain currency'. The School of Business has conducted informal benchmarking exercises of its courses against several institutions including: North Texas, Tennessee State, University of Bahrain, Ahlia University, Higher Colleges of Technology, Monash, Trinity College Dublin and Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The BBUS curriculum was also benchmarked to professional qualifications within the major areas of studies undertaken including: Association of Certified Chartered Accountants, Institute of Leadership & Management, Chartered Institute of Marketing and Chartered Institute of Securities and Investments. The School of Business recognizes that 'While the benchmarking exercises undertaken by the School were useful in establishing general equivalency, it is appropriate to benchmark against a smaller number of schools aligned to its strategic positioning'. During interviews with senior management, the Panel was informed that as the School of Business matures, more robust benchmarking processes will be undertaken with similar institutions. In this regard, the School has initiated partnerships with Haaga-Helia in Finland, University of East London in the UK and Cork Institute of Technology in Ireland as potential

institutions. The Panel concurs that the School of business needs to conduct formal benchmarking against regional and international programmes that adopt the innovative PBL pedagogical approach. The Panel recommends that the School of Business develop and implement policies and procedures for formal benchmarking that explicitly state the purpose of benchmarking, choice of what is benchmarked, how the process is managed and how the outcomes are used.

- 4.3 The School of Business implements the Bahrain Polytechnic's Assessment and Moderation Policy A/AB/005 V2 which is regularly reviewed and revised by the Curriculum Unit in light of feedback from stakeholders. Upon examining the policy, the Panel finds the procedures clear and comprehensive covering assessment procedures, moderation procedures, group assessment, on-line assessment and work-integrated assessment. During interviews with teaching staff and students, the Panel learned that assessment policies are discussed in meetings and are accessible on SharePoint and Moodle. The Panel was also informed that Turn-it-in software is used to assure the academic integrity of the submitted assignments. Students interviewed by the Panel were aware of the concept of 'plagiarism' and indicated that the implementation of the Turn-it-in guides supported the enhancement of academic writing skills. The implementation of assessment policies will be further discussed in upcoming sections. From provided evidence and site visit interviews, it is evident to the Panel that assessment policies are effectively communicated to all stakeholders and are consistently implemented. The Panel appreciates that well established policies and procedures for assessment are consistently implemented, monitored and subjected to regular review and are made available to stakeholders.
- 4.4 Mechanisms to ensure the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes are detailed in the 'Assessment and Moderation' and 'Results and Reporting' documents. Teaching staff interviewed by the Panel indicated that they use rubrics to ensure that the assessments are consistent with the learning outcomes. The mappings of assessment to course ILOs are closely monitored by the Programme Committee and the Faculty Board. During interviews, students confirmed that all assessment methods are documented in the course specification, and that they are satisfied with the assessment tasks. The Panel acknowledges that appropriate mechanisms are implemented to ensure that assessment tasks are designed to accurately measure student learning, in alignment with the level of course learning outcomes.
- 4.5 The School of Business implements the institution's policy and procedures for internal moderation which is applied in two stages; pre-assessment and post-assessment. Teaching staff interviewed by the Panel indicated that the pre-assessment moderation is carried out by a peer before the examination (or an assignment) to ensure that the examination questions/assignments are consistent with the intended learning outcomes and that the grading rubric is appropriate. Post-

moderation, on the other hand, involves the grading of the examination papers/assignments by another peer to ensure consistency in assessment. The Panel also learned that the School of Business allocates one hour of workload per week for its teaching staff to carry out internal moderation. The reports prepared on pre- and post-moderation are monitored and analyzed for improvement at Business Programme level with oversight by the Business Programme Committee. The Panel notes that an annual moderation plan is prepared by each course coordinator, and that recommendations arising from the moderation process are incorporated into the course improvement plan. Samples of pre- and post-assessment moderation indicate that internal moderation processes are rigorously implemented. The Panel appreciates that effective internal moderation processes are implemented to ensure that course assessments are fit for purpose in the BBUS programme.

- 4.6 While an institutional Assessment and Moderation Policy is in place, external moderation was conducted on only two courses; namely Environment of Business (BSB5000) and Globalization and Business (BSB5002), by the Auckland University of Technology in the first year these courses were offered. Since then, no external moderation of the BBUS programme courses has taken place. The SER identifies a number of constraints that are currently making it difficult for external moderation from take place. The SER also states that 'resumption of external moderation within the programme is a top priority for the School of Business and will be included in the QIP for academic Year 2014-2015'. During interviews, the senior management team informed the Panel that the School of Business is considering the appointment an external monitor from Maastricht University with a remit for future external moderation on a sample basis. The Panel recommends that the School of Business expedite the implementation of effective external moderation to further ensure the academic standards of the BBUS programme.
- 4.7 The appropriateness of the assessment levels within the BBUS programme is ensured by the implementation of the BP Qualifications Framework, with higher level courses requiring more advanced skills. In addition, the institutional Results and Reporting Policy (A/AB/017) mandates the range of achievement on a particular course, as reflected in assessment outcomes. The Panel had the opportunity to scrutinize adequate samples of assessed students' work, including final examination papers, important assignments, industry projects as well as pre-moderation and post-moderation reports together with rubrics. The Panel notes with appreciation that the level of students' achievement is in line with levels of similar regional and international programmes. This conclusion is supported by the external validation panel's report indicating that BBUS students' achievement is at the appropriate levels regionally and internationally. During interviews with teaching staff, the Panel learned that the programme has recently participated in the QQA pilot mapping exercise of courses, the results of which indicate that students are being assessed at

the appropriate levels from a national and international perspective. The Panel appreciates that effective mechanisms are implemented to ensure that students are being assessed at the appropriate levels from a national and international perspective.

- 4.8 The Industry Project which embraces the BBUS ILOs is representative of the graduates' achievements. Upon examining a number of Industry Projects, the Panel noted that students integrated the skills and knowledge that they developed over their degree years and is hence convinced that the graduates of the BBUS Programme have achieved the overall aim and programme ILOs. The Panel's conclusion is supported by the rigorous internal pre- and post-moderation processes, as well as by the very recent experts validation panel report. In this report, the external validation panel cited the industry project as a 'core asset to the Bahrain Polytechnic, allowing it to differentiate itself from other institutions'. The Panel encourages the School of Business to externally moderate the Industry Project to assure that the achievements of the graduating students are consistent with the similar programmes, in Bahrain and internationally. The grade distribution for the Industry Projects correlate with the students' performance in earlier BBUS courses. In addition, the Panel notes that the survey carried out by the School of Business on its first cohort of graduates on 31 December 2013 indicates that out of 38 graduates contacted, 31 were employed within a period of 6 months. Furthermore, the graduates and employers interviewed by the Panel were very satisfied with the knowledge, skills and competencies attained by the graduates. The Panel appreciates that the level of graduates' achievement meets the programme aims and learning outcomes, as demonstrated in final results, grade distribution and confirmation by independent scrutiny.
- 4.9 Bahrain Polytechnic does not operate a cohort system and therefore, year-on-year progression, retention rates and length of study are not measured. Alternatively, achievement rates of individual courses are reported as part of the annual review process, and compared to institutionally-specified target of 90% in the Polytechnic's first Strategic Plan. Teaching and administrative staff confirmed that the measurement of students' progression is problematic as students have tailored pathways through their programme of study and BANNER tracks the progress of each student individually. The SER indicates that 220 students were recruited in the 1st semester and 142 students in the 2nd semester of 2009-2010 academic year. From the first cohort 65% (144 students) graduated, 5% (11 students) transferred to other programmes, 15% (33 students) withdrew/dismissed while 15% (32 students) are still studying at the Business Programme. Examining the second cohort of students, out of 142 admitted students, only 30% (43 students) graduated, while 39% (55 students) are still continuing and 31% (44 students) withdrew/dismissed. The Panel is of the view that the falling number of students admitted and the increasing number of students leaving the BBUS (from 15% to 31%) needs to be carefully examined. In its

SER, the School of Business recognizes the importance of establishing systematic automated cohort measurements. The Panel concurs and recommends that the Faculty of Business implement a students' cohort analysis and utilize the outcomes to inform decision-making in the Faculty.

- 4.10 Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the implementation and monitoring of the assessed work-based learning. In its interviews with teaching staff, the Panel learned that for a work-based assignments, a mentor is appointed to communicate with the workplace supervisor and to provide support for students towards assignment completion. The Industry Supervisors are also consulted on the performance of the students. These procedures were confirmed during site visit interviews with students and supervisors. Upon examining provided evidence, the Panel noted that the assessments of work-based projects, as in the case of examinations or other assignments, are pre and post-moderated and graded with the use of appropriate rubrics. The outcomes of these moderations are reported to the Programme Committee and is used to validate or improve the assessment delivery as required. The Panel appreciates that effective policies are consistently implemented for the management and assessment of work-based learning to assure that the learning experience is appropriate.
- 4.11 Policies, procedures and guidelines for the Industry Project are very well designed, including the specification of the Industry Project, Industry Agreement with the Host Company, appointment of a teaching staff as a supervisor, pre and post-moderations and rubrics application in the assessment of the completed Industry Project. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they are given a Handbook which sets out the project overview, their rights and responsibilities and confidentiality agreement. In addition, a signed Student Agreement is completed and filed. During interviews with project supervisors, the Panel learned that the selection of students is based on the project's scope and that each student is required to have an individual scope of work to complete as part of the overall project package. The Panel also learned that supervision hours are incorporated into the staff member's overall workload as student contact hours. The Panel appreciates that robust policies and procedures are implemented in the administering of Industry Projects.
- 4.12 Bahrain Polytechnic has a policy on establishing a Curriculum Advisory Committee based on the principles contained in its Strategic Plan 2008. Membership and Terms of References contained in the policy document encourages meaningful consultation with the private sector, professional bodies, government bodies and other relevant stakeholders. All meeting minutes are documented and are available on SharePoint. The Panel notes with appreciation that while CAC is prescribed to meet twice a year, it has met six times during 2013. During meetings with CAC members, the Panel found them to be very enthusiastic, and eager to contribute more than just advising

on the curriculum to ensure the marketability and employability of the BBUS graduates. A strong sentiment was expressed by CAC members to change the name of the CAC since their contribution was much broader than curriculum. The Panel encourages the School of Business to consider re-naming the CAC. Senior management team interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they are very satisfied with the CAC feedback on new curriculum developments, and with their assistance in sourcing Industry Projects for final semester students. The Panel appreciates that a functioning Curriculum Advisory Committee is in place with enthusiastic members whose recommendations are systematically used to inform programme improvements.

- 4.13 The BBUS programme had only two cohorts of graduates at the time of the site visit and thus the process of gathering data from graduates and employers is at its early stages. The Panel notes that the Career and Employment Centre (CEC) conducted a telephone survey of the first cohort of graduates' employment status. However, the survey outcomes, which were recorded in an Alumni Report, did not address issues of graduate satisfaction nor quality of the graduate profile. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the School of Business is currently developing a database of the BBUS graduates and employers and designing surveys to assess their satisfaction with the graduates' profile and how to improve the attributes of the graduates with regard to the knowledge, skills and competences attained as they graduate from the Programme. The Panel acknowledges the efforts of the School of Business in conducting 'School Industry Forum' and 'School Graduates' Forum' to consult them on 'which aspects of the attributes of the graduates could be improved' in order to improve the academic standards of the programme.
- 4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- Graduate attributes are clearly stated and there is a link between the ILOs, types of assessments and graduate profile.
 - Well-established assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented, monitored and subject to regular review and are made available to stakeholders.
 - Effective internal moderation processes are implemented to ensure that course assessments are fit for purpose in the BBUS programme.
 - The level of students' achievement is in line with levels of similar regional and international programmes, as confirmed by independent external scrutiny.
 - Effective mechanisms are implemented to ensure that students are being assessed at the appropriate levels from a national and international perspectives.

- The level of graduates' achievement meets the programme aims and learning outcomes, as demonstrated in final results, grade distribution and confirmation by independent scrutiny.
- Effective policies are consistently implemented for the management and assessment of work-based learning to assure that the learning experience is appropriate.
- Robust policies and procedures are implemented in the administering of Industry Projects.
- A functioning Curriculum Advisory Committee is in place with enthusiastic members whose recommendations are systematically used to inform programme improvements.

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

- develop and implement policies and procedures for formal benchmarking against regional and international programmes that adopt the innovative PBL pedagogical approach
- expedite the implementation of external moderation to further ensure the programme's academic standards
- implement a students' cohort analysis and utilize the outcomes to inform decision-making in the Faculty.

4.16 **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 Bahrain Polytechnic's Quality Management System has a centralized register of policies, procedures and terms of reference for academic governance, some of which are Student appeal, Student admission, Results and Reporting, Programme approval and Research and Scholarly activities. Policies are managed under the auspices of the Quality Measurement Analysis and Planning Directorate (QMAP). The approved policies and procedures are made available to academic staff on SharePoint in a 'Quality site' while those pertaining to students, such as the Assessment Policy, are available on MOODLE. Students interviewed by the Panel confirmed that they are fully informed about and understand the policies pertaining to them. The consistency of academic policies is verified by the Programme Committee, Faculty Board, and the Academic Board at Faculty level and Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) chaired by the Executive Director Projects and assistant to the CEO, at institutional level. To ensure consistent policy development and the monitoring of policy implementation at Faculty level, a Programme Manager for Quality has recently been appointed in each Faculty. The Panel appreciates that the Institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently across the Faculty.
- 5.2 In ensuring that governance structures are coordinated and the goals of the Faculty are achieved, leadership is demonstrated by the clear governance structures that are in place. In particular, at Faculty level, the Dean is supported by the Programme Manager who, in turn, is supported by the Course Coordinators. A Programme Committee, with representatives from key support functions outside of the Department, oversee the running of the Programme and report monthly to the Faculty Board and by extension to the Academic Board. Leadership is also illustrated by the Performance Enhancement Process in which academic staff members have the opportunity of identifying enhancement activities for their personal and professional development. Responsible leadership is evident from the stable management structure supporting the development of an appropriate governance structure, for example, the Head of School and the Dean are active members of the Academic Board and the Dean serves on the senior management team. Furthermore, the strategic positioning project is indicative that the School of Business has a clear direction for the next five years. The Panel appreciates that Programme leadership is effective and responsible.

- 5.3 The quality assurance management system operates at various levels. Firstly, at the institutional level QMAP is responsible for managing the policies and procedures, as explained in Section 5.1, and AQAC assures that the quality management system are consistently implemented in all the Faculties. Secondly, at Faculty level, the Programme Manager for Quality oversees quality assurance for Programmes while at the Programme level, the Programme Committee monitors and evaluates the implementation of academic policies. There is an opportunity of sharing best practices through the annual Programme review process. Processes that are used for quality assurance include student surveys, course surveys and reviews, pre- and post- internal moderation, annual and periodic Programme reviews and validations. The quality assurance process for the School of Business was confirmed in the interview with Bachelor of Business academic and administrative staff members. A quality assurance process for the development of new Programmes, including the market research, validation, benchmarking, mapping to qualifications frameworks and accreditation is also in place. The Panel appreciates that there is a clear quality assurance management system that is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- 5.4 Quality assurance issues are discussed at various forums such as staff meetings, periodic training sessions, mainly offered by the CTTL and team sessions. The roles and responsibilities, generic programme information and the moderation of assessments are clearly communicated to academic staff members in their 'Staff Handbook February 2014'. Furthermore, quality assurance issues are addressed in the 'Certificate in Tertiary Teaching and Learning' (CTTL) which all new staff members are required to attend and pass. The faculty members prepared their course specifications and have their courses moderated internally. The Panel learned in interviews that the Faculty of Business developed a plan for academic staff to enhance quality assurance and accountability. From the different site visit interviews, the Panel noted with appreciation the strong and shared understanding amongst staff members and students about quality assurance.
- 5.5 The Policy on Programme Approval clearly outlines the procedure for the development of new Programmes and new majors in a Programme as well as the procedures for the approval of high impact and low impact courses. During interviews, the Panel learned that ideas for a new programme or major (concept brief) are submitted to the Senior Management Team to gain support for the market needs analysis, for example the new majors in Human Resources Management and Business Tourism. The fit for purpose is evident in producing graduates that meet Bahrain's needs as well as ensuring that there is no or limited overlap with other external providers and across Programmes offered at the Polytechnic. The Panel appreciates that there are rigorous policies and procedures for the development of

new programmes to ensure that they are relevant and fit for purpose to meet the economy's needs.

- 5.6 Programmes undergo annual programme reviews which are managed and coordinated by the Curriculum Unit and monitored by the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) for institutional oversight. Timely release of information on key programme statistics are made by the Registry and course survey results by the Quality Unit in September each year. During interviews, the Panel was informed that the Programme team writes up the Programme review, including individual course reviews and an action plan. An update on the previous action plan is also generated and monitored by the Programme Committee throughout the year. The Panel appreciates that there are appropriate arrangements for annual internal programme evaluations and implementation of recommendations for improvement. The School of Business recognizes the need to better integrate different reports into the operational decision making processes at Programme Committee and Faculty Board. To this end, a project is in place to implement a curriculum management system that will integrate the Registry, LLC and HR systems and tie them into the needs of the Faculty programmes. The Panel recommends that the School of Business expedite the acquisition of a reporting tool to enhance the capturing of data for quality reviews and decision-making.
- 5.7 Mechanisms are in place for the periodic external and internal reviews of the Bachelor of Business programme as stipulated in the Evaluation and Review Policy (A/QA/002) and the Institutional Quality Framework. The Policy on Evaluation and Review stipulates that in the review process feedback has to be obtained from internal and external stakeholders and the Programme Approval Document outlines that the periodic reviews are guided by the QQA standards and external feedback. Evidence of both internal and external review processes and the resultant quality improvement plans, includes: the report on the internal Programme review in 2012; Annual Programme Reviews (APR) undertaken by the academic staff members in the Faculty; and the re-validation of the Bachelor of Business Programme by a Panel of 13 international experts in January 2014. The Panel learned from the interviews that minor changes to the Programme based on internal review in 2012 and APR's have been implemented and the feedback from an international expert panel in January 2014, for example combining the Banking and Finance with Accounting, is in the process of being implemented. The Panel was also informed that an external monitor has been appointed from Maastricht University to monitor the implementation of recommendations arising from the validation exercise. Since the Bachelor of Business is not fully mature yet, it has been necessary to have the thorough internal and external reviews. However, going forward, the Panel suggests that that external reviews take place on a four to five year cycle. The Panel notes with

appreciation that the review feedback from both the internal and external stakeholders is considered and feeds back into the improvement process.

- 5.8 Mechanisms are in place for collecting and analyzing students' feedback consistent with the 'Institutional Quality Survey Framework'. Surveys conducted include Teaching Survey, Course Survey, Student Experience Survey and Student Services Survey. Teaching surveys are collected and analyzed each semester by QMAP which then sends the surveys summaries to the Dean, the Heads of School, and the individual teaching staff. Course surveys are handled in the same manner and are sent back to the Dean, the Head of School, and the course coordinator responsible. During interviews with the programme team, the Panel learned that the results of the Teaching surveys are used for tutor professional development plans whereas Course survey results are included in the annual programme review action plan. The Panel notes with appreciation that the course survey results and improvements from the previous semester are communicated to students in the first weeks of the course. In addition, CAC surveys are administered annually by the industry liaison team and analyzed by the QAMP. The survey results are discussed in the CAC meetings, with identified issues added to the action plan in the meeting minutes. The Panel encourages the School of Business to gather information from other external stakeholders, such as the potential employers of the graduates. In doing so, the BBUS would also receive feedback on possible new types of 'knowledge' (courses) needed by business practice and the types of competencies required.
- 5.9 The Panel notes that since the first cohort of students graduated at the end of 2012-2013 academic year, comprehensive feedback still needs to be obtained from the Alumni. The recently formed Alumni club surveyed Alumni three and six months post-graduation on their employment status and salary level, and two preliminary Alumni reports were generated. During the site visit, the Panel learned that a draft online Alumni Survey has recently been developed but is not yet approved for implementation. Upon examining the draft survey, the Panel noted that some questions consist of multiple elements, and that the questions on employability skills needed to be re-phrased. The Panel encourages the School of Business to revise the draft Alumni survey to clarify the questions on employability skills and how well the institution developed these skills amongst its graduates, as this would be more appropriate for improving on how the programme develops these skills amongst the current cohorts of students.
- 5.10 There is an institutional Professional Development Application Committee which processes professional development applications for funding and leave. These applications require Civil Service Bureau's approval. A new Performance Enhancement Process was launched in December 2013 in which employees and their line manager are required to sign off on a professional development plan each year

based on areas for development identified in the performance appraisal. Furthermore, during interviews teaching staff confirmed that they were satisfied with the informal and formal support offered by the Teaching and Learning Unit to academic staff members for professional development, including the induction programme. Faculty members also confirmed that even though research is relatively new to them, they are encouraged and supported to attend local and international conferences, seminars, workshops, academic leave, professional exams and course work. The Panel encourages the School of Business to motivate its teaching staff to conduct academic research through proper incentives (see section 3.5). The Panel notes with appreciation that the professional development needs of teaching staff are identified by means of the PEP and that the development plans are monitored and evaluated.

- 5.11 In scoping the labor market, the School of Business relies on an external market needs analysis research to identify new opportunities. Feedback from the programme re-validation by the international expert panel in January 2014 cited the collection of labor market intelligence as best practice, and this is now being institutionalized as a collective request for proposals for ongoing labor market research. In addition, the Curriculum Advisory Committee, comprised of industry experts in the discipline, provide industry input to the curriculum while ensuring an appropriate balance between attaining academic standards and meeting labor market needs. The Panel encourages the School of Business to continue its close liaison with the industry stakeholders regarding the labor market needs in Bahrain and the Gulf area.
- 5.12 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- The institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently across the Faculty.
 - The Programme leadership is effective and responsible.
 - There is a clear quality assurance management system that is consistently implemented, monitored and evaluated.
 - There is a strong and shared understanding amongst staff members and students about quality assurance.
 - There are rigorous policies and procedures for the development of new programmes to ensure that they are relevant and fit for purpose to meet the economy's needs.
 - There are appropriate arrangements for annual internal programme evaluations and feedback from both the internal and external stakeholders is considered and implemented in the improvement processes.
 - The course survey results and improvements from the previous semester are communicated to students in the first weeks of the course.

- The professional development plans of teaching staff are linked to their appraisal results, and are monitored and evaluated.

5.13 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the School of Business should:

- expedite the acquisition of a reporting tool to enhance the capturing of data for quality reviews and decision-making.

5.14 **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 of the Faculty of Business offered by the Bahrain Polytechnic .