

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



# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

## **Programmes-within-College Reviews Report**

**Bachelor of Science in Nursing  
College of Health Sciences  
University of Bahrain  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 19 - 21 November 2012**

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## Acronyms

BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing
CHS	College of Health Sciences
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
HR	Human Resources
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
MIS	Management Information Systems
MoH	Ministry of Health
OSCE	Objective structured clinical examination
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
RN-BSN	Bachelor of Science in Nursing for Registered Nurses
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SMC	Salmaniya Medical Complex
UoB	University of Bahrain
WHO	World Health Organization

## **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 and the judgement will be 'no confidence', as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Criteria for Judgements**

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
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 <b>Indicator 1</b> is not satisfied	

### **1.2 The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the University of Bahrain**

A Programmes-within-College review of the College of Health Sciences (CHS) of the University of Bahrain 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 19–21 November, 2012 for the academic programmes offered by the college, these are: Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and a bridging programme that leads to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing for Registered Nurses (RN-BSN).

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

The University of Bahrain was notified by the DHR/QQA in March 2012, that it would be subjected to a Programmes-within-College reviews of its College of Health Sciences with the site visit taking place in November 2012. In preparation for the

review, the University of Bahrain conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER with appendices on the agreed date in July 2012.

The DHR constituted a panel consisting of experts in the academic field of Nursing and in higher education who have experience of 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 University of Bahrain will use the findings presented in this report to strengthen its BSN programme. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence it is the right of the University of Bahrain to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, the University of Bahrain is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to the University of Bahrain 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 BSN programme.

### **1.3 Overview of the College of Health Sciences**

The CHS was founded in 1976 by the Ministry of Health. All the academic programmes at the college were developed in collaboration with the American University of Beirut. The CHS prepares nurses and allied health professionals to work in the Bahrain healthcare sector. It also provides a range of continuing education programmes for the Ministry of Health employees and for other local and international organizations.

The Nursing Division at the CHS offers currently a range of programmes: entry into practice BSN, RN-BSN, and a number of post-RN specialist diploma programmes covering community health, midwifery, psychiatric, cardiac, and emergency nursing.

On 30 October 2011, the Cabinet issued a resolution to move the CHS from the aegis of the Ministry of Health (MoH) to the University of Bahrain (UoB). The college is currently in a transition phase. However, at the time of the site visit, operations including administrative, financial and Human Resources (HR) were still run by the MoH.

#### 1.4 Overview of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing

The CHS started by offering an Associate Diploma degree in Nursing which can be followed by a bridging programme that would lead to a bachelor degree. In the year 1995, a World Health Organization (WHO) Consultant was assigned to evaluate the nursing curriculum, in terms of recommendations for nursing education in Bahrain. The recommendation was to plan for the direct entry BSN programme. The college designed the programme and the first intake commenced studies in September 2003 with a cohort of 64 students. The programme graduated its first cohort of 47 graduates in January 2008.

There are 597 students currently registered in the programme. The College is run by a total of 105 staff, 79 of which are academic staff. These staff members support the different programmes offered by the CHS. A total of 57 faculty members are involved in the teaching of the BSN programme. In addition the BSN students are taught by 30 preceptors in the clinical setting.

#### 1.5 Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing

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
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>confidence</b>

## 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 Curriculum Framework of the BSN programme is linked to the mission and vision statements of the CHS, the Programme Educational Objectives and Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs). However, the Panel noted that there are some inconsistencies in the published statements of the programme Educational Objectives and the programme ILOs amongst different documents submitted by the college. The Panel recommends that the college revise its documentation and rectify these inconsistencies.
- 2.2 The BSN programme is a four and a half years full-time programme, including the Foundation Semester, and consists of 125 credit hours divided into theoretical, laboratory and clinical components. The programme is delivered over eight regular semesters and one summer session. Students' workload is reasonably spread throughout the programme and within professional standards. The progression of the curriculum is generally acceptable and shows developmental progress from simple to complex courses. The nature of the programme is prescriptive and inflexible and as a result, students have to take courses as scheduled for the semester. Students do not have options of selecting courses in the programme. If a student fails a course, he/she will need to wait to retake the course the following academic year, which is likely to delay the student's progression rate. During interview sessions, students indicated that they would like the flexibility of selecting courses within the semester and would like to see courses, especially critical ones, being offered in all semesters. It was apparent to the Panel that the CHS is aware of this issue and anticipates that it will be able to address this as its incorporation into UoB becomes complete.
- 2.3 The syllabus presented meets the norms and standards of the nursing profession at the bachelor level. The depth and breadth of the content are notable through the programme outcomes and the course implementation as in the course work at different levels.
- 2.4 The submitted documents and interviews with faculty members indicate that the CHS has developed the programme using various regional and international norms. The programme has benefited also from reviews by external consultancies. This has impacted the development of the programme and courses ILOs and their alignment with the mission and vision of CHS. The students and interns interviews show that they are informed about these ILOs and what is expected from them upon completing a course and graduating from the

programme. However, upon reviewing the programme and courses ILOs, the Panel noted that some of the ILO statements are written as objectives rather than outcomes statements and these should be reviewed.

- 2.5 The courses ILOs are derived from the programme ILOs and are generally appropriate. The Panel examined the mapping of the course ILOs to the programme ILOs and found that there is a reasonable spread of course ILOs to cover the programme ILOs. However, the Panel is of the view that there is a need to revisit the coverage of programme ILOs as for few courses there is no strong evidence to support that they are appropriate for the programme ILOs they are mapped to; an example is the NUR 118 and 128 courses which do not have clinical components. Nonetheless they are mapped to the programme ILO 'Provide comprehensive, culturally sensitive nursing care....'. One would expect that these courses would have clinical components.
- 2.6 The BSN programme has several courses that require laboratory and clinical experience to be gained in hospitals and health centres. In addition, the CHS has basic nursing, anatomy and biochemistry laboratories. These are sufficient to meet the requirements of the programme. For clinical experience, students are sent to Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) and public health centres as per allocated hours for clinical experience. On calculation of actual clinical hours, the Panel noted consistency and balance in clinical experience as indicated in the curriculum. All components of the clinical courses are allocated credit hours and are assessed in various methods including Objective structured clinical examination (OSCE), observation and clinical portfolio. However, during interview sessions students indicated that they need to observe clinical experience during the foundation semester so that they can have a 'real feel' of the profession and assess if they are in the right programme. Notwithstanding the above, the Panel is of the view that the programme meets, at least, the minimum requirement of clinical training for the nursing programmes.
- 2.7 The BSN programme is delivered using various teaching and learning methodologies as indicated in the SER and the course syllabus portfolios that encourages students' active involvement and contribution in their learning experience. Interviews with students, alumni, and faculty members indicated that the college encourages various teaching and learning methodologies and that faculty members take full advantage of the teaching and learning opportunities available both in the college facilities and at the clinical settings. However, on a visit to the CHS facilities, the Panel noted that the college has mostly traditional teaching facilities. There is a need to introduce modern teaching facilities such as advanced simulation laboratories that would consolidate learning. Whilst course syllabus portfolio indicate the teaching methods to be used for each course, the Panel was not

able to find a clear overarching policy regarding teaching and learning within the college. This should be considered by CHS for future development.

2.8 The CHS has a general policy on assessment. The examination of documents reveals that the programme has various strategies for assessment which are included in the college's catalogue. However, the samples of course portfolios showed that there are no standard or clear criteria for formative and summative assessments. This is supported by both faculty interviews and the SER which indicates there is a need to develop a standardized policy for formative and summative assessments. The Panel supports the CHS efforts in developing and improving this area.

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

- The Programme Educational Objectives are linked to the CHS vision and mission and are appropriate to the needs of the BSN programme.
- The programme was developed in line with various regional and international norms and has benefited from reviews by external consultancies.
- Courses ILOs are derived from the programme ILOs and there is a reasonable spread of course ILOs to cover programme ILOs.
- The depth and breadth of the curriculum content is notable and the curriculum provides a progressive development from simple to complex knowledge.
- There is a consistency and balance in clinical experience and work-based learning is appropriate with level, scope and content.
- There is evidence that the programme uses various teaching and learning methodologies which encourages student engagement in the learning process.

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

- address the inconsistencies in the documentation of the Programme Educational Objectives and the programme and course Intended Learning Outcomes
- review course Intended Learning Outcomes of the NUR 118 and 128 courses to ensure that they are appropriately mapped to the programme Intended Learning Outcomes
- develop and implement a formal overarching policy on teaching and learning
- expedite the development of a formal policy for formative and summative assessments.

## 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 The BSN programme has a clear admission policy which is regularly reviewed and subsequently revised. The admission policy has clearly stated criteria that are appropriate for the programme type and level. One of the criteria stated is to pass the English admission test. However, there is no information about what is the required score on the this test. During interview sessions, the Panel learned that the English passing score might change from one year to another. Furthermore, the admission criteria does not set a maximum time limit on the date of acquisition of the high school degree. The admission policy was subject to a review in 2011, and as a result some of the criteria were changed. However, the Panel did not see evidence of clear documentation of this review process. The Panel learned during the site visit that there is continuous review of the admission criteria especially as the college is working now to streamline its operations with UoB. In its review of the admission criteria, the Panel suggests that the college evaluate its students' performance against their entry point and to document formally this review process.
- 3.2 The Panel studied the profile of admitted students and their suitability for the nursing programme and found it to be similar to other colleges of nursing in the region. During the site visit, the Panel learned that in the past there was a lack of emphasis on the important of personal interviews with applicants. This policy was revised, based on input from different stakeholders, and interviews were re-introduced to the new admission criteria.
- 3.3 The CHS sits as a Directorate within the MoH, and although as of October 2011, the college was moved formally to UoB, a number of its operations and reporting lines are still through the MoH. The Panel saw evidence of a document stipulating the course coordinators' rules and responsibilities. Moreover, it was evident throughout the site visit that there is a general understanding of the line of accountability and communication between faculty members, course coordinators, Head of programme and the chairperson of the Nursing division.
- 3.4 While the relationship between clinical settings and the CHS has existed through an unofficial setup, as both entities were part of the MoH, this relationship needs to be officially structured and documented, as the college now is part of UoB.
- 3.5 Throughout the site visit, it was evident to the Panel that the CHS faculty members and hospital staff demonstrate a strong commitment and enthusiasm to teach and mentor students, to set aside time for student supervision, and to provide the

necessary resources and exposure to teaching materials. Reviewing faculty members qualification list, the Panel found that there are faculty members teaching general courses which are outside their area of specialization and expertise. For example some of those who teach English their specialty is in HR. Another area of concern is the fact that faculty members who are holding administrative positions are also responsible for a high teaching load. The Panel is concerned that this represents a high challenge to the effective management and delivery of the BSN programme. It was also stated in the SER that 'the majority of BSN faculty members are MSc degree holders in various nursing specialties and four faculty members are currently pursuing their PhD studies' and that the college 'intends to enhance faculty research capabilities in nursing with more doctoral degrees to add value to existing good practices'. The Panel encourages the CHS to expedite its plan for developing faculty research capacity as it would inform the evidence-base required to support the currency and relevance of the programmes.

- 3.6 The CHS has clear policies and procedures related to the recruitment, appraisal, promotion, and induction of new staff members. During interviews with staff members and senior management, it was evident to the Panel that these policies were implemented. However, it was apparent during these interviews that it is not clear to all faculty members how these policies will change, if any, as the CHS becomes more fully integrated into UoB. The CHS needs to ensure that all faculty members are aware of the new policies for recruitment, appraisal, promotion and retention that will be applied once the college is fully integrated with UoB.
- 3.7 The Panel saw evidence of an induction programme that newly recruited faculty members undergo. Moreover, some faculty members stated that they have attended training workshops on teaching and learning. Documentation indicates that there is a shortage among faculty members in the programme. Yet, there was no clear strategy for recruitment. There was no data presented about retention of faculty or staff members in the CHS. The college needs to address these issues.
- 3.8 The CHS has an electronic Management Information System (MIS) that is utilized to monitor students information. During interview sessions, it was evident to the Panel that the college is aware of the shortages within its MIS in general and that it hopes these shortages will be resolved soon. The college also monitors its students through the Student Monitoring Board (SMB). The Panel supports the college's efforts in reviewing and revising the accessibility of its academic advisors to accurate and up-to-date information about their advisees through its MIS.
- 3.9 The CHS has established its policy and procedures to ensure the security of its computerized information. The SER indicates that all data on its MIS are 'automatically copied to the Health Information Directorate (HID) server as a backup

to safeguard information'. The Panel verified the college statement and concluded that there is an effective and detailed procedure for data backup and restoration.

- 3.10 The Panel toured the campus and noted that the CHS has expanded its physical and materials resources during the past few years. Provided documentation and interview sessions indicate a demand on the CHS to increase the number of new students admitted to its programmes. To respond to this demand, the institution needs to continue its resource expansion.
- 3.11 The college utilizes the SMC and other government clinics and health centres for the practical training of its students and internship. When the college was under the MoH, this created a unique environment where faculty members and students cultivate and enjoy a professional and supportive relationship with SMC staff. The college needs to formalize this relationship while assuring that the current relationship will continue as the college is now part of UoB. Moreover, the Panel learned, during interview sessions with faculty members and hospital staff, that the number of nursing students and other health studies students at SMC is getting larger and that this number may exceed the capacity of the clinical sitting . The Panel recommends that the CHS investigate alternative clinical learning environments.
- 3.12 The CHS reports the use of logbooks for tracking the usage of its teaching and learning resources, other than the utilization of its online resources which are tracked digitally. Interviewed staff members confirmed that there is continuous evaluation of the usage of the college's physical and digital resources. However, some teaching and learning resources, such as the nursing laboratories, are not formally monitored or tracked for usage. The Panel suggests that the CHS establish a consolidated tracking system for the use of all its education facility systems including the laboratories to inform planning and decision making.
- 3.13 The college provides a high level of students support in relation to the medical library, laboratories, digital resources, guidance, counselling and academic and non-academic advising.. This was confirmed during discussions and interviews with the students, faculty members (full- and part-time) and staff members of the library and IT at the college. The Panel saw evidence of different activities and services provided to students and was satisfied with the level and type of support received by students on educational and non-educational fields.
- 3.14 The CHS offers newly-admitted students an orientation day in which they are welcomed and introduced to faculty members and the BSN programme. Students are briefed on important rules and regulations related to them while studying in the college, and are presented with students handbook. Students interviewed during the site visit confirmed the suitability of the orientation programme.

- 3.15 The Panel noted the adequate level of academic support provided to the students, such as tracking students' progress and interventions considered when students are at risk of failure. There are clear documentation related to the methods of identifying at-risk students and a mechanism of referring them to the counsellor. Furthermore, there is a full-time qualified counsellor available on campus, who is responsible for all types of students counselling (psychosocial, social, and academic). The Panel learned, during interviews with support services personnel, that as a result of early intervention, only few students are at risk of failure.
- 3.16 The college states that it provides an adequate learning environment as a whole that enhances and expands the student experience. This was confirmed during the site visit. The Panel is pleased to note that the learning environment at the college is conducive to expanding the student learning experience and encourages the CHS to improve further students' experience through providing more e-learning resources and encouraging student involvement in scientific research.

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

- There is a clear admission policy which is regularly reviewed and revised as needed.
  - There is a clear line of accountability and responsibility within the college that is known by staff members and students.
  - Faculty members and hospital staff demonstrate a strong commitment and enthusiasm to mentor and teach students, to set aside time to students supervision, and to provide necessary resources and exposure to teaching materials.
  - There are clear policies and procedures in relation to recruitment, appraisal, promotion, and induction of new staff members that are constantly implemented and checked for accuracy.
  - There is a highly effective student support, including academic advising, counselling and orientation for newly admitted students.
  - There is a clearly defined mechanism for identifying at-risk students and follow-up.
  - The learning environment is conducive to expanding the student learning experience.
- 3.17 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College of Health Sciences should:
- expedite its plan to develop faculty research capacity and develop a clear effective strategy to attract and recruit qualified faculty with a PhD degree

- formalize and document the college's relationship with the medical centres and hospitals used as clinical settings
- develop a mechanism to familiarize its staff with the policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the UoB which will be applicable to the college
- investigate the possibility of utilizing other hospitals, beside Salmaniya Medical Centre, as a clinical setting for the BSN programme.

### 3.18 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 BSN programme has clearly stated Program Educational Objectives (PEOs) and programme and course ILOs which are, in general, appropriately mapped. Graduate attributes are, in general, clearly stated, consistent and resonate with the programme syllabus and with a synthesis of theory and practice and recognition of the contribution of each to the ILOs .
- 4.2 The BSN programme is developed in line with the requirements of Bahrain, GCC and the WHO standards. The programme is also benchmarked against the University of Illinois at Chicago nursing programme and the requirements of the International Council of Nursing. Whilst the focus on international standards for benchmarking is laudable, it is unclear regarding the specifics of these in terms of actual nursing education standards and the affiliation to different universities in this regard makes it difficult to measure. During interview sessions, the Panel learned that these activities are not periodical and they are subject to the availability of budget, the suggestion of affiliation goals not being achieved due to budgetary constraints represents a concern should this impact deleteriously on academic standards transparency.
- 4.3 The college has policies on assessment rules that are stated in the CHS Policy Manual and the Student Handbook. The Panel reviewed these policies and found the mix of assessment strategies and procedures to be appropriate and consistent with the aims and goals of the programme. The Panel also reviewed samples of assessed students' work and found that whilst on balance students' work was appropriate to the level of work expected, the reviewed materials contained examinations which occasionally included the answer within the question. The Panel also noted that a few research proposals submitted by the students as a requirement for the course work of NUR 412 'Nursing Research' comprised a single page document. The college needs to develop a monitoring system to ensure the consistency of assessment and student work requirements amongst all its courses.
- 4.4 There is evidence of a range of assessment tools, such as final and mid-term examinations, quizzes, case study presentations, practical examinations and clinical evaluations, being utilized to assess the achievement of courses and programme ILOs. Examinations and quizzes are prepared by teaching staff members and reviewed by course coordinators to ensure their consistency and alignment with the ILOs. The Educational Development Centre conducts item analysis of examination papers and as part of the new incorporation into UoB, the programme team adopted

the UoB mechanism to measure the achievement of the ILOs for each course. However, greater clarity on the mechanisms in place to ensure alignment and consistency between the faculty members is needed, taking into account any regulatory issues that may have arisen as a consequence of the incorporation would be useful.

- 4.5 The CHS has a system of internal moderation where by 'all assessment instruments are double checked by the BSN teaching team'. Written tests, projects, and oral presentations are subjected to double marking and average scores are awarded. Marks and grades are double checked by two staff members for accuracy before their approval by the Head of programme. Final semester grades are discussed in the Academic Council pending the Dean's approval. The Panel notes the different mechanisms for internal moderation that are in place. However, the reliance on exit survey data as an element of this may represent a weakness in terms of veracity and clarity and actual contribution to the moderation process. A more rigorous and comprehensive approach of evaluating the effectiveness of the internal moderation system is needed.
- 4.6 Currently there is no external moderation system. This is recognized by the college as a weakness and is currently being addressed. A process of external moderation, as envisaged by the college, with neighbouring nursing colleges may have limitations as the number of institutions providing nursing programmes within Bahrain is very limited. The college needs to develop and implement a comprehensive external moderation system that ensures the impartiality of the external examiners in line with international good practice.
- 4.7 The college has conducted a number of programme reviews which also evaluate the academic standards of the programme and student's achievement. However, there are limitations in current practice. This has been acknowledged by the college which is now in the process of exploring collaboration with other universities to address this. The Panel is of the view that this represents a crucial component of assuring the attainment of academic standards and should be addressed promptly.
- 4.8 The college has developed recently a mechanism to evaluate if students meet the programme and course ILOs. Analysis of achievement levels of students suggest that they meet the ILOs. These analyses, however, provide information about the average achievement of the group of students attending a given course. The Panel is of the view that more specific details of the analysis and the route to this conclusion is desirable. The Panel noted that the outcomes of the employer survey support the graduates achievements.
- 4.9 The CHS keeps a record of overall students progression and more than 60% of students graduate within the 4.5 year timeframe, with a few taking longer. The fact

that courses are offered only once a year, as stated in Section 2 of this report, may contribute to this. The data suggests that the average dropout rate of the programme for the last four years is at 17.6%. The Panel recommends that the college develop and implement a detailed system to monitor students' attrition rates by year and an evaluation system to explore reasons for exit prior to programme completion. The Panel is concerned with the lack of a maximum period for graduation, however it was informed during the site visit, that the college's integration within the UoB would address this issue as the college will be operating in line with UoB's regulatory framework.

- 4.10 Work-based learning takes place at SMC and public health care centres. The Panel visited the SMC and interviewed students, interns and mentors and concluded that the work-based learning experience provided to students is appropriate in level, scope and content.
- 4.11 A Programme Advisory Committee, responsible for all nursing programmes including the BSN, was established recently and it has conducted three meetings until the time of the site visit. The committee's composition and function is appropriate and its role is clearly circumscribed. The Panel saw evidence of the programme details and feedback results being discussed by the committee and was pleased to note the proactive attitudes of the committee's members towards the programme.
- 4.12 A range of evidence was presented to the Panel which supports graduates and employers satisfaction with the programme. This was confirmed by the employers and alumni interviewed by the Panel during the site visit.
- 4.13 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Academic Standards of the Graduates, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:
- Graduates attributes are clearly stated and resonate with the course syllabus.
  - There is clear evidence of a synthesis of theory and practice within the programme and recognition of the contribution of this synthesis to programme Intended Learning Outcomes.
  - The programme has benefited from a number of benchmarking activities and there is evidence of a focus on international standards for benchmarking.
  - The mix of assessment strategies and procedures used across different courses is appropriate and consistent with the aims and goals of the programme.
  - Mechanisms for internal moderation and monitoring are established throughout the programme.
  - There is a functioning Programme Advisory Committee with an appropriate composition and clear remit.
  - Employers and alumni are highly satisfied with the programme.

4.14 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the College of Health Sciences should:

- develop and implement a formal policy and procedure for benchmarking activities that clearly state what is being benchmarked, how, and why and how the outcome of these benchmarking activities will be utilized
- develop and implement a monitoring system to ensure the consistency of assessment and student work requirements amongst all the courses of the programme
- develop and implement a comprehensive external moderation system that ensures the impartiality of the external examiners in line with international good practice
- develop and implement a detailed system to monitor students' attrition rates by year, and an evaluation system to explore reasons for exit prior to programme completion.

#### 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 There are clear descriptions of policies, procedures and regulations that are consistently and effectively applied. The current policy and procedure manual was revised and approved in February 2011. The transition to the UoB may create issues in terms of regulatory concordance with the university and articulation of this possibility in terms of actions taken would be useful.
- 5.2 As stated in section 3 of this report, there is a clear hierarchy which demonstrates a leadership chain in terms of programme responsibilities.
- 5.3 The quality of the programme is assured by the Academic Council, the Educational Development Centre, the Chair of the Nursing Division and the Head of programme. Quality of students learning experiences are sought through the end of semester faculty evaluation forms filled by students and their feedback on academic and non-academic issues provided through the Student Monitoring Board. Notwithstanding the above, the college lacks an overarching quality assurance system. This is recognized by the college and the Panel learned during interview sessions that this is being addressed. The Panel was informed that the college has developed recently a post for a Quality Assurance Advisor which was just filled at the time of the site visit. The Panel recommends that the college develop and implement a clear process with time line for the development and implementation of an overarching quality assurance system.
- 5.4 During interview sessions it was evident to the Panel that there is recognition of the role, and the importance, of quality assurance amongst staff members. There is a strong commitment towards a quality assurance culture amongst the programme team staff. In its process of formalizing its quality assurance system, the college needs to ensure that the system is understood and adhered to by all its staff.
- 5.5 The Panel was provided with evidence of a practice adopted by the college for the development of new programmes. During interview sessions, it was confirmed that staff members are aware of this practice. However, formal policy and procedures for the development of a new programme need to be articulated with explicit documentation of process and a flowchart and demonstrable audit trail.
- 5.6 The BSN programme is reviewed and improved annually through an informal rather than formal process. The programme has also gone through a number of external

reviews all of which, the Panel learned, are based on *ad hoc* decisions and as budget permits. The Panel saw evidence of changes to the programme as a result of such reviews. However, the impact of the developing evidence-base on programme and course improvements could be more readily articulated. The Panel recommends that the CHS formalize its review process for the annual internal and periodical external reviews of its programme.

- 5.7 The Educational Development Centre collects and analyses student feedback on courses and faculty members at the end of each semester. The Panel saw evidence of the programme team obtaining feedback from employers and other stakeholders that have led to changes and improvements of the programme design and delivery at a variety of levels. Recently the CHS has formalized the process of collecting feedback from different stakeholders by conducting surveys, such as exit survey, employer survey, alumni survey. These surveys have been utilized by the college to conduct its self-evaluation process and produce the SER for this review. The Panel encourages the college to collect these feedback consistently and periodically, and employ the outcome of these surveys in the BSN programme development and evaluation.
- 5.8 At the time of the site visit, the college's staff development followed the procedures and criteria of the Directorate of Training in the MoH. This is coordinated through the HR Development Committee at the CHS. The SER states that 'a training need assessment is carried out every two year, and a plan for faculty/staff development is formulated accordingly'. The Panel was provided with a document stipulating the annual HR development needs and long term training for the period 2009 – 2011. However, the Panel did not see evidence of monitoring and evaluating the progress within the plan. Moreover this plan is not clearly linked to the college strategic goals and the BSN programme aims and objectives. The Panel recommends that the staff development plan be reviewed.
- 5.9 There is a clear annual appraisal system for staff members. Nonetheless the Panel did not see evidence of a link between the outcome of these appraisals and the professional development activities attended by staff members. The college needs to ensure that staff development is linked to the staff appraisal system.
- 5.10 The annual student's intake to the programme is planned in conjunction with the MoH as it is the main employer of the programme's graduates. The CHS also discusses its programme offering with other students' sponsors such as the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), Ministry of Education, and the private sector. The Panel is satisfied that there is a clear process in place for the purpose of scoping 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 are clear descriptions of policies, procedures and regulations that are consistently and effectively applied.
- There is a number of mechanisms adopted to assure the quality of the programme delivery.
- There is recognition that quality assurance is fundamental to programme quality.
- There is evidence of the collection and feedback and its use for programme review and improvement.
- There is a clear process in place for scoping labour market needs.

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

- develop and implement an overarching quality assurance policy and system
- formalize the practice of the internal and external review and development of the programme.
- develop and implement a formalized mechanism that would collect stakeholders' feedbacks consistently and periodically and formally and employ the outcome of these surveys in the BSN programme development and evaluation
- develop and implement professional development plan linked to the college strategic goals, programme aims and objectives, and staff appraisals outcomes with a mechanism to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan.

### 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/QAAET *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2012*:

**There is confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing programme of the College of Health Sciences offered by the University of Bahrain.**