



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Higher Education Review Unit

Programme Follow- Up Review Report

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

Gulf University

Kingdom of Bahrain

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1. The Programme Follow-up Review Overview

The follow-up site visit by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) Programme Review is part of a cycle of continuing quality assurance, review, reporting and improvement by the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

This follow-up review process applies to all programmes that have been reviewed in 'Cycle - 1' of the programme reviews undertaken by HERU, and that received a 'limited confidence'. Whilst those that received a 'no confidence' judgement are subject to a full new review.

The subsequent sections of this Report have been compiled as part of Phase 2 of the HERU/QAAET's programme follow-up cycle highlighted in the HERU Programme Review Handbook, and associated with the on-going process of Institutional and academic quality and enhancement review of Higher Education Institutions located in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

1.1 The aims of the follow-up review are to:

(i) Assess the progress made in quality enhancement and improvement (in accordance with the four QAAET indicators) of the Gulf University's Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme (BBA) since the original programme was assessed in January 2009, for which the review report was published in June 2009.

(ii) Provide further information and support for the continuous improvement of academic standards and quality enhancement of higher education provision, specifically within the BBA degree at Gulf University, and for higher education provision within the Kingdom of Bahrain, as a whole.

2. The Institutional and Programme Context of the Review

The original programme review of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, at the Gulf University in the Kingdom of Bahrain was conducted by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in January 2009, and the review report was published in June 2009.

The overall judgement, in accordance with the HERU/QAAET Programme Review Handbook of the original Review Panel was that of '**limited confidence**' in the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, at the Gulf University in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Consequently the follow-up review process incorporated the review of the evidence presented by Gulf University to HERU/QAAET, the Improvement Plan, the second Self-Evaluation Report SER(2) and during the follow-up site visit and other key documents relevant to the review.

The original External Review Panel's judgement on Gulf University's Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme for each indicator was as follows:

Indicator 1: Curriculum; 'satisfied' the Indicator

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the programme; 'satisfied' the Indicator

Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the graduates; 'did not satisfy' the Indicator

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance 'satisfied' the Indicator".

As a result of the above, most of the time, during the follow-up site visit was focused on re-examining the Programme and the quality assurance and enhancement processes associated with the Indicator that did not satisfy the minimum HERU/QAAET standards at the time of the original site visit in 13th-14th January 2009, (i.e. *Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates*) and determining the extent to which the original Review Panel recommendations for this Indicator had been demonstrably reflected in the Improvement Plan and were fully implemented in the BBA Programme at Gulf University at the time of the follow-up site visit.

It should be noted, however, that the indicators *for* Curriculum; Efficiency and Effectiveness of the programme; were also considered in relation to the recommendations made by the original Review Panel in 2009 during the site visit of November 2010.

The aim of the following sections of this follow-up Review Report is to evaluate the progress made in the Gulf University's BBA Programme since its original review, and to determine the extent to which the Programme's Improvement Plan has been applied in a manner which satisfactorily demonstrates that the recommendations of the original review report have been adequately implemented.

2.1 External Reviewers' Overarching Comments on the Progress demonstrated for Gulf University's Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme

Sections 3-6 of this Report go on to discuss the extent to which Gulf University's BBA Programme Team have adequately addressed the original Review Panel recommendations stipulated in the Programme Review of January 2009, and the review report published in June 2009.

This evaluation is based on the evidence contained in the SER(2) submitted in September 2010, the relevant appendices of the SER(2), the Programme review report, the Programme Improvement Plan, and relevant supplementary materials submitted to the Panel up to 18.00 hrs on Monday 29th of November 2010.

The institution and its Programme Team are to be commended for the considerable effort they have evidently put into developing their Improvement (Action) Plan, providing a detailed response to the recommendations made by the Review Panel of January 2009, and this has been reflected in the delineation of the specific actions attempted; the responsibilities of individual faculty members/institutional representatives; the implementation stated and scheduled completion dates and notional budgets.

However, whilst the majority of the original Review Panel's recommendations were addressed in the Programme 'Improvement Plan' (apart from recommendations 4, 7 and 12) not all of these actions were found to be implemented fully at the time of the SER(2) follow-up site visit.

This led the Panel to conclude that the implementations of these recommendations were, in some instances designated by Gulf University's representatives, as 'anticipated', or perceived as being 'currently in-progress' (Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress) rather than adequately addressed at the time of the follow-up visit, as recommended by the Programme review report of June 2009.

3. Indicator 1: Curriculum Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, Gulf University, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of June 2009, in terms of curriculum, the teaching and the assessment of students' achievements; and as a consequence contribute to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this indicator and whether the Programme has met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in 'Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress', of this Report.

3.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding Curriculum the Panel notes with appreciation that:

- New overarching Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the BBA Programme have been developed.
- Some initial consultation with the External Advisory Group has taken place.
- The use of student surveys in week 12 and group meetings with the Dean and suggestion boxes to generate feedback and foster consultation has been introduced/continued.
- A broad policy document has been developed regarding the use of External Assessors for standards benchmarking and determining the equivalence of academic standards.

3.2 The Panel suggests that the College of Business, Management and Finance of Gulf University address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA Programme:

- It is not clear how learning is differentiated between Programme levels and subject areas for the BBA Programme. Level and subject ILOs need also to be used to delineate clearly academic progression and deepening as well as widening of understanding knowledge and practical skills development.
- There is no clear delineated procedure as to how the external examiner policy will be applied in detail; e.g. the selection of external examiners, the balance of local versus international examiners, the tenure of employment, the level of remuneration, the scope of external examiner's subject areas, courses, the levels covered by the policy, the powers and authority of the external examiner. More detailed operating guidelines and specific requirements re subject and level

coverage, as well as the duration of appointment and the level of authority of the external examiner, a calendar of scheduled meetings with external examiners and BBA Examination Boards/committees needs to be delineated as a priority.

- Student consultation appears to be chiefly (other than the week 12, student surveys) *via ad hoc* consultation with adoption of ‘suggestion’ boxes, aggregate meetings with students rather than *via* a formal student representation on Department Council, or other formalised and routinised input. The Panel encourages the College to introduce student representatives for all Programme levels with positions on all key BBA committees as soon as is possible; only one External Advisory Board meeting has been officially scheduled by the institution so far. As a result, it has had a limited impact on the Programme development.
- The teaching and learning and assessment policy remains somewhat generalised, i.e. it does not sufficiently differentiate between levels or subjects. (Contains description not explanation of policy and its implementation.) There also remains a lack of distinction between the roles of ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ assessment in the formal assessment policy for the BBA Programme. The Panel encourages the College to develop a revised teaching and learning and assessment policy which incorporates a more detailed explanation of the policy applies between levels or subjects, and outline a more detailed distinction between the roles of ‘formative’ and ‘summative’ assessment and the notional student effort for each course as well as the number of class contact hours.

3.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the June 2009 Review Panel’s recommendations for Curriculum are being addressed *via* relevant actions and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 1: Curriculum.

4. Indicator 2: Efficiency Follow-Up Review

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, Gulf University, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of June 2009, in terms of efficiency related to the use of available resources, the admitted students and the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates; and as a consequence contribute to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme has met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in 'Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress', of this Report.

4.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding Efficiency the Panel notes with appreciation that:

- A partial system for performance analysis within individual courses appears to be currently in place.
- The staff numbers and staff student ratio would appear to show some improvement compared with the January 2009 site visit.
- A student and advisor handbook have been developed and circulated.
- Feedback from employers *via* the External Advisory Group have been initiated.

4.2 The Panel suggests that the College of College of Business, Management and Finance of Gulf University address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA Programme:

- Although a rudimentary system for the provision of statistics on graduates GPAs was evidenced, the Panel did not see any compelling evidence to indicate that within and cross-subject comparison was possible, that the spread of marks and cohort analysis in a statistically meaningful sense had been, or is undertaken. The analysis of the data appears to be currently confined to simple descriptive statistics, with little evidence of comparator analysis, standard deviation calculation, or evaluation of the spread of grade distributions. Performance data may be in the 'system' as cited by faculty members, but there remains a paucity of evidence as to meaningful analysis and interpretation having taken place, or anticipated to have taken place in the future. Consequently the diagnostic statistical cohort analysis recommended by the original Review Panel is viewed by this Panel to be currently anticipated by the Programme Team but not

adequately implemented. The Panel is of the view that a more detailed approach to cohort analysis is to be adopted in order to allow cross-subject comparison, that the distribution of marks between and across courses be determined and cohort analysis can be undertaken in statistically meaningful sense. This approach should allow for the analysis of the data beyond simple descriptive statistics, facilitating comparator analysis, standard deviation calculation, and evaluation of the spread of grade distributions longitudinally.

- The staff numbers and staff student ratios would appear to highlight that faculty member's teaching loads are relatively high, due to teaching being spread across a relatively large number of small classes (multi-sections) in an attempt to satisfy student preferences. This has led to faculty members having less time available for self-development, training, research and other scholarly activity. The Panel is of the view that a more transparent Resource Allocation Management workload model needs to be used for BBA faculty members' work allocation and that sufficient resources be allocated to allow greater opportunities for faculty members to pursue personal (academic) self-development, training, research and other scholarly activity.
- The formalised system of review of academic achievement appears to be primarily administrative rather than interpretative and diagnostic. Thus its capacity to inform admissions policy (particularly for students with lower 'tawjehia' scores) and subsequent scrutiny of academic achievement in relation to the grades awarded and distribution of marks is limited. The Panel suggests that the College adopts a more formalised system of review, of academic achievement and entry requirement, to allow for a more detailed analysis of student academic performance for a more precise profile of student performance relative to the entry and exit velocity.
- The Panel was unable to verify and triangulate the College's claim that a student handbook was circulated or the level of staff-student consultation because of the limited number of representative students made available to meet with the Panel (in this instance, only one student participated). The Panel suggests that a more formal system of staff-student consultation be established to monitor and update faculty/student communications e.g. *via* a BBA Programme webpage, or other form of virtual community building or *via* printed material in the form of Programme and course handbooks.
- Some arrangements appear to be in place for admitting and inducting new students. However, in case of students transferring from other colleges, a formal system of accreditation for prior learning does not appear to be rigorously implemented. The Panel suggests that a more formal and transparent system of

Accreditation for Prior Learning be implemented as soon as possible for the BBA degree.

4.3 **Conclusion**

The Panel notes with interest that documented evidence exists that the June 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for the Indicator have been addressed in the Improvement Plan, and are anticipated [by the Programme Team] to be implemented at some later date but have not been fully implemented.

On balance, the Panel finds that the BBA Programme Team has not successfully implemented June 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Indicator 2: Efficiency.

5. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, Gulf University, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of June 2009, relating to meeting acceptable academic standards in comparison with equivalent programmes in Bahrain and worldwide; and as a consequence contribute to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme has met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in 'Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress', of this Report.

5.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding Academic Standards of the Graduates the Panel notes with appreciation:

- The Development of a new 'External Examiner' Policy.
- The recruitment of external consultant(s) to provide (detailed) *ad hoc* feedback on the quality of graduates, and the emerging standards benchmarking policy.
- The selection of a number of 'target' institutions for quality and standards benchmarking.
- That surveys of stakeholders have been undertaken.

5.2 The Panel suggests that the College of Business, Management and Finance of Gulf University address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA Programme:

- The implementation of the External Examiner Policy has not been fully implemented across the range of cognate areas/courses for the Programme. It should be noted that both the senior faculty members and the external consultants, indicated that they both 'anticipated' that implementation will take place in the 'near future' but that there was, to date, no existing formal arrangement (i.e. in writing) in place. The Panel urges that the External Examiner Policy be fully implemented across the range of all the cognate areas/courses, levels for the Programme as soon as is possible.
- The detailed protocol and selection criteria for standards benchmarking remains unclear. The Panel suggests that criteria for academic standards benchmarking be clarified in relation to the criteria and selection process of benchmark (academic) institutions, programmes, external stakeholder (e.g. potential and current

graduate employers) graduate standards mapping and outcome equivalence setting as soon as is possible.

- Delineation of the process of selection and the detailed scope of the external examiner role has not been fully realised in this process. The Panel is of the view that the detailed scope of the external examiner role needs to be addressed as soon as possible (e.g. maximum number of course covered by the external, balance between local and international external examiners, the roles responsibilities and powers of Externals, the frequency and form of formal contact and liaison, the input into programme design and teaching and learning policy, also the budget and resource allocation should be delineated, in addition, how new external examiners are inducted).
- The cohort analysis available for external scrutiny and standards benchmarking appears to be limited and confined mainly to descriptive statistics. The data provided to the Panel was highly aggregated, did not indicate the spread of marks across the whole Programme, nor provide sufficiently detailed the analysis of entry point and subsequent performance across the cohorts. The Panel encourages the College to adopt and implement a procedure for more detailed cohort analysis *via* evaluation of grade distribution statistical tracking and evaluation with and across course and years. In addition a more formal policy for the implementation of strategies to avoid grade inflation *via* internal moderation needs to be devised, articulated and implemented.
- The external consultant provided input at a College level, rather than exclusively for the BBA degree. Such input appears to be currently an *ad hoc* arrangement, with no formal contract or detailed arrangement in place for future on-going moderation and standards evaluation and benchmarking for the BBA Programme. The Panel is of the view that a more detailed, formal, on-going, programme of external grade scrutiny needs to be developed and implemented across all the course within the Programme as soon as is possible.
- The ILOs outlined in the Programme schemata and the course outlines predominantly focus on description and practical application rather than synthesis, critical appraisal and application of constructs, frameworks paradigms. This has led to the predominance of evaluation in later years of the Programme, (based on the scripts reviewed by the Panel during follow-up site visit) of assessment of 'surface' learning *via* the use of short answer questions, quizzes and MCQs rather than more determining the occurrence of 'deep learning' *via* more exacting essay type closed book examination questions, academic thesis, etc. The Panel suggests that the Programme Team revise the ILOs, and the

assessment strategy to allow for the assessment of higher level learning outcomes (i.e. deeper learning).

- The potential contribution of external stakeholders for judging academic standards has not fully been realised because to date only one External Advisory Group meeting has taken place. The Panel suggests that a formal programme of External Advisory Group meetings be scheduled, which will more formally facilitate external feedback, particularly for academic standards and graduate level (employability) skills attainment.

5.3 Conclusion

The Panel notes with interest that documented evidence exists that the June 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for the Indicator have been addressed in the Improvement Plan, and are anticipated [by the Programme Team] to be implemented at some later date but have not been fully implemented.

On balance, the Panel finds that the BBA Programme Team has not successfully implemented June 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Indicator 3: Academic Standards of Graduates, and as a result, the Programme does not satisfy the HERU/QAAET requirements for this Indicator.

6. Indicator 4: Follow-up Review of Effectiveness of quality management and assurance

This section evaluates the extent to which the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration Programme, Gulf University, has complied with the recommendations outlined in the Programme review report of June 2009, relating to the arrangements in place for managing the Programme, including quality assurance; and as a consequence contribute to the Panel's decision regarding the level of implementation of recommendations for this Indicator and whether the Programme has met or exceeded the implementation thresholds as outlined in 'Appendix 1: The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress', of this Report.

6.1 In coming to its conclusion regarding Effectiveness of quality management and assurance the Panel notes with appreciation that:

- Attempts appear have been made to address the need for (academic) experience equivalence for students registered on the 2-day (weekend) delivery.
- An embryonic quality enhancement and review process appears to be emerging.
- The use of workshops and briefing documents appear to evidence that attempts are being made to cascade information concerning quality enhancement and monitoring.
- Data in areas related to quality enhancement appear to being generated.

6.2 The Panel suggests that the College of Business, Management and Finance of Gulf University address the following matters of particular importance in its search for continuous improvement of the BBA Programme:

- An embryonic quality enhancement and review process is emerging, however, it is evident that the process has not been adequately communicated to key stakeholders (e.g. student representatives and External Advisory Group members and faculty members) in a manner that would reassure the Panel that such parties have adequate awareness and understanding of the processes and desired outcomes involved. The Panel suggests that information concerning the on-going quality enhancement and review process initiatives be communicated to key stakeholders on a proactive and timeous basis.
- The Programme Team's efforts in attempting to build a quality assurance culture is evident *via* initiatives including workshops and training sessions. However, to

date, these initiatives appear to be mainly *ad hoc* and lack an overarching purpose. From the follow-up site visit it would appear that some faculty members remain unclear as to their personal role in contributing to Programme 'quality enhancement' and often perceived quality as something that is done 'to them', rather than 'monitored and managed by them'. Consequently, the Panel suggests that this issue be addressed *via* a more structured system of training and staff development.

- It is not clear from the documentation provided how the teaching, learning and assessment policy has been informed by the Programme and course ILOs, for example in relation to employability skill development. The Panel suggests that this omission be addressed as soon as possible *via* the Programme Team, advisor, and student handbooks.
- Attempts at monitoring implementation of assessment policies for the BBA Programme have been initiated by the Gulf University's Improvement Plan. However, how this has impacted positively on the Programme management remains unclear. Often the solution adopted would appear to be the development of a new or revised policy document and a new committee rather than the demonstrable implementation of revised quality systems, processes and procedures. This process and monitoring gap is a key omission in the quality monitoring and enhancement of the Programme. How key quality enhancement judgments are made and the rationale for their application have not been adequately mapped out by the Programme Team. The Panel suggests that this omission be addressed as soon as possible. Similarly, although data in areas related to quality enhancement are being generated, it is still unclear as how such data are analysed and have subsequently impacted on the Programme content. Consequently, the focus of such initiatives appears to be on the collection of data rather than the generation of strategic intelligence for quality monitoring and enhancement. The Panel suggests that this omission also be addressed as soon as possible.
- The Programme Team highlighted the need to 'review examination regulations', but it is not clear to what purpose. Consequently the Panel could not judge if this objective had or had not, been implemented. Consequently, the Panel suggests that clarification in this area be delineated and disseminated to key stakeholders as soon as possible in order to judge progress and determine outcomes.

6.3 Conclusion

On balance, the Panel finds that evidence exists that the June 2009 Review Panel's recommendations for Effectiveness are being addressed *via* relevant actions and

that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge for Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance.

7. Overall Conclusion

The outcome of the follow-up review process by HERU/QAAET for the BBA Programme offered by GU is as follows:

That the BBA Programme at Gulf University has not successfully addressed the recommendations stated in the June 2009 review report and has not implemented its improvement plan.

The Review Panel still does not have confidence in the Programme.

Appendix 1: *The Five Implementation Thresholds for Delineation of Recommendation Implementation Progress*

- I. Extensive good practice is evidenced as a result of the comprehensive implementation of the Review Panel's recommendations for the Indicator; or**
- II. That the Programme Team has adequately addressed and has fully implemented the Review Panel's recommendations for the indicator; or**
- III. That the Review Panel's recommendations for this indicator are currently being addressed via relevant actions (beyond the establishment of a new policy or committee) and that an improvement cycle is beginning to emerge, (but has not yet fully emerged) for the Indicator; or**
- IV. That documented evidence exists that the Review Panel's recommendations for the Indicator have been addressed in the improvement plan, and are anticipated [by the Programme Team] to be implemented at some later date; or**
- V. That the Review Panel's recommendations for the Indicator have not been adequately addressed in the action plan nor in the interventions by Faculty of the institution.**