

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



# **Directorate of Higher Education Reviews**

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

**Bachelor in Interior Design  
College of Architectural Engineering and Design  
Kingdom University  
Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 30 November – 2 December 2015  
HC071-C2-R071**

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## Acronyms

ARD	Admissions and Registration Department
AQAO	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Office
BSAE	Bachelor of Science in Architecture Engineering
BID	Bachelor in Interior Design
CAED	The College of Architectural Engineering and Design
CIDA	Council for Interior Design Accreditation
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPRDC	The College Programme Review and Development Committee
CTLAC	The College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee
CQAC	College Quality Assurance Committee
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
FTE	Full Time Equivalence
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEC	Higher Education Council of the Ministry of Education, Kingdom of Bahrain
IAC	Industry Advisory Council
ID	Interior Design
ILO	Intended Learning Outcome
KU	Kingdom University
LABSTATS	Laboratory Tracking System

LACS	Library Access Control System
LMS	Learning Management System
MIS	Management Information Systems
NQF	Bahrain National Qualifications Framework
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA-UK	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education – United Kingdom
QMS	Quality Management System
QQA	National Authority for Qualifications & Quality Assurance of Education & Training
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UPRDC	University Programme Review and Development Committee
UQAC	University Quality Assurance Committee
UTLAC	University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee

## The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

### A. 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**

<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	

## **B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the Kingdom University**

A Programmes-within-College review of the Kingdom University (KU) 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 30 November - 2 December 2015 for the academic programmes offered by the College of Architectural Engineering and Design (CAED), these are: Bachelor of Science in Architecture Engineering (BSAE) and Bachelor in Interior Design (BID).

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

KU was notified by the DHR/QQA on 20 May 2015 that it would be subject to Programmes-within-College reviews of its College of Architectural Engineering and Design with the site visit taking place on 30 November - 2 December 2015. In preparation for the review, KU conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SER with appendices on the agreed date on 20 September 2015.

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

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to KU 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 KU.

## **C. Overview of the College of Architectural Engineering and Design**

The College of Architectural Engineering and Design is one of the four KU colleges, which was established in 2001. KU started offering academic programmes in September 2004 and currently offers eight programmes on a range of disciplines. The College of Architectural Engineering and Design mission is to 'provide architecture and design education by combining both theory and practice in order that the students are prepared to embark upon the challenges of the distinct and competitive career, locally, regionally and internationally'. Its mission is closely aligned to KU vision and mission, which seeks to offer 'quality educational experience centred on its students to develop their knowledge, skills and values; achieved through excellence in teaching, learning, research, and community engagement'. KU vision, mission, core value and goals are accessible on its website, emphasizing the institution role in student development, research, industry linkages, community engagements, and faculty and staff development.

The College of Architectural Engineering and Design offers two bachelor degrees in Architecture Engineering and Interior design through two departments: The Department of Architecture Engineering and Department of Interior Design. The

statistics provided by CAED during the site visit indicated that there were 153 students registered in the two programmes in the first semester of the academic year 2015-2016 and the total number of academic staff was 11; nine of them are full-time and two are teaching on part-time basis.

#### **D. Overview of the Bachelor in Interior Design**

CAED first offered the BID programme in the academic year 2008-2009, graduating its first batch comprising one student in 2011-2012. BID is currently offered through the Department of Interior Design and CAED is planning to apply for accreditation from the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA) for its BID programme. 10 students have graduated since the commencement of the BID programme and currently there are 41 students registered in the programme according to the statistics provided by the institution during the site visit. Currently, there are seven full-time and two part-time academic staff contributing to the programme.

#### **Summary of Review Judgements**

**Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Bachelor in Interior Design**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Judgement</b>
1: The Learning Programme	Satisfies
2: Efficiency of the Programme	Does not satisfy
3: Academic Standards of the Graduates	Does not satisfy
4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance	Satisfies
<b>Overall Judgement</b>	<b>Limited Confidence</b>

## 1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

- 1.1 CAED has a clear academic planning framework for the BID programme, which aligns the programme directly to both KU and CAED's mission statements and contributes to the strategic goals of each. This is evidenced in some detail in the SER, which illustrates programme mapping to college mission, goals and graduate attributes and their relationship to the KU Strategic Plan for the academic years 2012-2017. In the academic year 2014-2015, the programme was subject to a major review. This involved substantial contribution from faculty, students, alumni, external academic panel and industry representatives. The programme aims are based on an extensive survey of a range of regional and international programmes of similar nature and level, a process underpinned by a parallel development workshop to ensure alignment with the college vision and mission – and by extension that of the University. The Panel notes with appreciation that the programme is aligned to the KU vision, mission and strategic goals; the college vision and mission and the correlation between these and programme aims, these are relevant and appropriate.
- 1.2 As indicated in the SER the programme as delineated in the specification is staged and designed to support progression. Course levels 1–4 move from the development of a 'framework' of 'basic knowledge' *via* transition to the development of 'comprehensive understanding' to the 'synthesis of prior knowledge' and culminate in student's skill acquisition in 'critical appraisal'. The programme is structured as eight semesters delivered over four years and incorporates an internship between the third and fourth year. The programme comprises 142 credit hours drawn from 43 courses and distributed as follows: 21 credit hours (8 courses) university requirement; 40 credit hours (14 courses) college requirement; 69 credit hours (17 courses) core programme requirement and 12 credit hours (4 courses) of programme elective requirements. The electives offered in Level 3 and 4 provide students the potential to tailor their studies to a particular fit for practice, or further study and the Panel notes that this usefully underpins the graduation project, additionally the blend of topics covered in the elective offering has been enhanced in the 2015–2016 revisions. Academic progression is appropriately regulated through prerequisite courses. Students are required to complete these in order to progress and the registration system blocks those who attempt to register with incomplete achievement in this area and facilitate course-by-course progression as evidenced in the 'Study Tree'. The Curriculum is broad ranging, encapsulating both the practical (core Studio) – which should ideally cover both practical and theoretical concerns; Building Information Modelling and Lighting and Acoustics, and the theoretical elements such as Modern History and Theory of Interior Design; Interior Design Now. It also usefully includes

broader domain relevant topics clustered under such contextual titles as Bahraini and Regional Architecture and Art and Design for People and Society. This Curriculum blend is supported by a variety of field trips, lectures from invited guests and practice visits and culminates in the graduation project and practical training courses. Mechanisms such as periodic reviews of provision and international benchmarking ensure that programme content remains adequately balanced. The Panel considers the student workload as appropriate, a position supported during meetings with faculty members and corroborated during the meeting with students, and notes with appreciation that the curriculum in general is coherent, provides year on year progress and an appropriate balance between theory and practice. Nonetheless, the Panel is concerned that there is insufficient emphasis on the detail of projects, materiality and applied theory, and recommends that the College revise the scale and context of projects within the curriculum, which is too detached from both the potential of the subject specialism and the specific programmes location in the context of Bahrain. The Panel also expects that the recommendations put forward by External Reviewers relating to detail on CIDA referencing and Studio course progression are carefully considered and implemented where appropriate.

- 1.3 The College conducted web-based benchmarking across a variety of similar programmes and invited international External Reviewer commentary on the syllabus. Syllabus design was endorsed by this process, with some qualification in regard to workload, however the Panel considers the design to be appropriately weighted. From the samples provided the Panel acknowledges that course documents contain sufficient levels of detail and are clearly laid out with relevant referencing, assessment methods relevant to the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and delineated course content. What was less clear was how specific Interior Design (ID) research might become manifest within the syllabus. Such research and teaching linkages are crucial to the relevance and the profile of a programme of this nature and while the Panel considers examples such as the 'Green Roof' research cluster to be exemplary it is clear that there is more room in the programme for innovative approaches to interiority of this nature. The Panel notes with appreciation that the 'Green Roof' research cluster has great potential for research teaching linkages with innovative contextual connection to a specific, potentially unique regional expression of interiority and considers levels of professional practice within the programme to be appropriate. However, more attention should be directed towards relevance of industry partnerships, input and involvement. From meetings with practitioners/industry partners, including some who offered internships, it was clear that this aspect of the offer required further development to ensure relevance and fit within the regional and international context.
- 1.4 The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) are aligned with the College mission and BID programme aims and are clearly stated in the programme

specification. They have been formulated in relation to relevant national, regional and international benchmarking and reference the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA); Bahrain National Qualifications Framework (NQF); CIDA and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) – United Kingdom Subject Benchmarking Statements for Art & Design. The Panel studied the PILOs and notes that these are measurable, cover all expected categories such as knowledge, subject specific skills, critical and analytical thinking and transferrable skills as detailed in the programme specification – and established at an appropriate level for the degree of BID. The Panel appreciates that the programme intended learning outcomes are aligned to the aims and objectives of the programme at an appropriate level for the degree.

- 1.5 Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) have been similarly benchmarked against national, regional and international references with further robust critique at the recent subject review. Evidence of how CILOs map to PILOs can be found in course specifications. This was further explored at meetings with faculty. The Panel notes that CILOs are similarly mapped to the NQF Level Descriptors and further benchmarked against CIDA standards. The mechanism involved includes an overseeing role performed by the programme Chairperson in collaboration with the staff team, which usefully includes staff similarly involved in mapping procedures within the BSAE programme. The Panel appreciates that the CILOs have been properly mapped to the PILOs and are appropriate to the aims and levels of the course.
- 1.6 Work-based learning is undertaken in the form of industrial/professional training. The BID programme includes a compulsory six credit Practical Training Course comprising 200 hours and running over eight weeks. This occurs during the second semester of year 3. Participation in this industry experience is predicated on students achieving at least 60% of programme credits. It is clearly indicated in the Study Plan for the programme. As indicated in the SER the process of assessment is clear and involves a variety of stakeholders, including the participating student; an academic and a field supervisor; the programme Chairperson and the assessment jury, as well as additional input from the participating industry partner and the university careers office. The process has appropriately detailed supporting documentation in the form of a Practical Training Procedure circulated to all stakeholders, which includes a co-created overview of ILOs developed by the Practical Training Course Coordinator in dialogue with the academic supervisors, these are mapped to the PILOs. Interview sessions with stakeholders highlighted some concerns with the internship. These included a perceived lack of preparedness for industry and suggestions of a lack of clarity with reference to the Academic Advisor role. Panel comments from the evidence seen considered that the self-reflection in the student 2 weeks report lacked depth, while the Practical Training Jury report lacked sufficient detail, in the form of written feedback, for students to productively ‘learn’ from the assessment. While the

Panel recognizes the value of the internship course in principle, it recommends that the College revisit the placement portfolio of offers in some details, with input from existing and additional industry partners and to increase the training period so as to give students greater opportunity for work-based learning and to ensure a balanced and appropriate level of experience.

- 1.7 KU's Teaching and Learning policy documentation and procedures are clear and relevant to the programme. These were made available to the Panel and include the range of teaching and learning methods employed which include Studio, Lectures, Seminar/Tutorial, Case Studies, Lab/Workshop, Visiting Lecture and Field trips, all are monitored by the College Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (CTLAC). From the material available, teaching and learning methods are mapped to CILOs and are appropriate. Instructors review content and mapping in discussion with the course coordinator/chairperson for review and development. The Staff Development Office convenes workshops to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of quality of provision in teaching and learning across faculty. The importance of fostering independent learners, crucial to a high-level design education, is also highlighted. The SER outlines the significance of student participation in the learning process. Examples of this include an emphasis on individual research, manifest in particular in the Graduation Project, self-reflection during placement, in addition students are expected to reflect upon the applied nature of design theory in practice, a process underpinned by the range of voices inputting into course delivery including industry experts, practitioners and faculty staff. Students participate in supervised and independent site visits that develop skills in decision-making, prioritization of tasks and time management as well as encouraging reflective practice relative to contextual matters both historic and contemporary. The Panel notes with appreciation that the Practicum offered to students is an innovative and important student experience, which has a central peer led component inbuilt in its structure and drew student and faculty attention to context and interdisciplinary work. Nevertheless, students' views on implemented teaching methods indicated some perceived disparity and inconsistency of course delivery. The Panel recommends that the College develop appropriate mechanism to ensure consistency of student experience within diverse courses by developing mechanisms such as staff/student forums where general awareness of course content can be monitored and discussed.
- 1.8 The University, *via* its Policy, Review and Development Committee (UPRDC) has developed an updated Student Work and Assessment Policy. The Student Work Assessment Procedures, the Student Work Assessment Guidelines and KU Plagiarism Avoiding Policy and Procedure, which empathize the use a computerized programme (Turnitin) to detect plagiarism, cover work and assessment. As indicated elsewhere in this Report, the assessment process incorporates an appropriate blend of theory and practice with clearly defined marking procedures and levels of attainment. The Panel

considers these policies, guidelines and procedures to be adequately disseminated to stakeholders, including staff, students and external partners (examiners, moderators and jury members). Feedback is continuous and based on course submission, external placement and workshop involvement and is designed to offer supportive responses to submitted work. Moderation and feedback is prompt e.g. in the case of the final summative submissions, within 72 hours. Feedback is provided as both written mark sheets, jury reports etc. and verbally either as group or individual tailored format. Transparency of grading mechanisms is achieved *via* the standard External Examiner/Moderator process. External Jurors are also included in the process of assessment. Arrangements for appeal developed by UPRDC include a procedure for students to appeal against final assessment grades. The process initially involves consultation with course instructor and subsequent second level appeal with the College Grievance Committee. Nonetheless, meetings with students and alumni generated an impression of dissatisfaction with assessment and feedback mechanisms. Panel meetings with staff confirmed clarity of understanding of these amongst faculty, however this understanding was less widely shared by students. The Panel acknowledges that relevant assessment and appeal procedures are in place though would recommend that the College should develop and enhance feedback mechanisms to include more opportunities for the students to receive written feedback on both formative and summative assessment.

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

- The alignment of the programme to the KU vision, mission and strategic goals as well as the College vision and mission and the correlation between these and programme aims are relevant and appropriate.
- The curriculum in general is coherent and provides year on year progress and an appropriate balance between theory and practice.
- The programme intended learning outcomes are aligned to the aims and objectives of the programme at an appropriate level for the degree.
- The course intended learning outcomes have been properly mapped to the programme intended learning outcomes and are appropriate to the aims and level of the course.
- The 'Green Roof' research cluster has great potential for research teaching linkages with innovative contextual connection to a specific, potentially unique regional expression of 'interiority'.
- The winter practicum is educationally intercultural and draws student and faculty attention to context and interdisciplinary work.

1. 10 In terms of improvement the Panel **recommends** that the College should:

- revise the scale and context of projects within the curriculum to ensure that there is sufficient emphasis on the detail of projects, materiality and applied theory
- revisit the placement portfolio of offers in some detail, with input from industry partners and increase the training period so as to give students greater opportunity for work-based learning and to ensure a balanced and appropriate level of experience
- develop appropriate mechanism to ensure consistency of student experience within diverse courses by developing mechanisms such as staff/student forums where general awareness of course content can be monitored and discussed
- develop and enhance feedback mechanisms to include more opportunities for the students to receive written feedback on both formative and summative assessment.

#### 1. 11 **Judgement**

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

## 2. 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.*

- 2.1 KU has clear admission policy and procedures that are communicated to stakeholders *via* the Student Handbook. High school scores are set at a minimum of 65% to be enrolled directly to the programme. For those who fall below this threshold, there is a preparatory orientation programme, which they should take prior to being enrolled into the programme. This, combined with the entrance examination process, helps ensure that a level of fit is achieved, and that selected students are capable of completing the programme. Potential students are interviewed, as part of the admission process, which is appropriate and should be a key component for admission decisions. However, it was brought to the attention of the Panel that KU had recently cancelled interviews, which is a retrograde step. Regulations are also defined for transferred students and external credit gained within the previous seven years is applicable, if the achieved grade is C and the maximum credits that can be exempted is 60% of the total credit hours of the BID programme. In the academic year 2013-2014, five students (20% of the intake) were transfers into year two or year three of the programme. The Panel is of the view that admission policy and procedures are clear and address all areas of importance for the programme, including transfers into the programme.
- 2.2 The SER states that procedures for admission seek to ensure that the profile of students admitted matches the programme aims and available resources. The profile of admitted students is monitored and maintained by the Admissions and Registration Department (ARD). This profile includes background material such as academic background, experience etc. The samples of student profiles submitted to the Panel record for each student; ID, name, school major, school GPA, CUM GPA, placement test scores (mathematics, English and architecture) and programme results by semester. In the provided sample of student portfolio, high school GPA ranged from 64% to 97.7%. The Panel also notes that the admission procedure allows for provisional admission to be granted in relevant cases, subject to completion of specified remedial courses. In the academic year 2014–2015, 11 students were admitted of which one was a transfer student. Two additional students were admitted from the foundation programme. All are full-time students, of these, five were female and the remainder male. Most were Bahraini (nine) with the balance (two) Arab. The Panel acknowledges that the profile of admitted students is in general satisfactory.
- 2.3 The programme lines of accountability are in place where the Department Chairperson manages the programme's tasks. The role of the Chairperson is to provide an assurance that the programme is delivered and assessed as approved and in

accordance with the university procedures and policies. The College Dean is ultimately responsible for all of the college's programmes. As stated in the SER and verified through comprehensive evidence submitted by the programme team there is a pyramidal structure headed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs and Research, through College Dean, who has ultimate responsibility for College programmes, Department Chairperson, Course Co-ordinators and finally Course Instructors. The discussion with senior personnel, staff, alumni, employees, and students highlights a broader issue of BID programme specific provision being perceived to be operating 'in the shadow' of the Architecture programme, a factor underpinned by the paucity of specifically ID educated or practicing faculty members represented in the programme team. Furthermore, students expressed repeated concerns over the relationship between the BSAE and BID programmes and sought a more distinctive flavour for the latter. The Panel recommends that the College revisit the BID programme ethos and to clarify how the programme sets itself up as a distinctive and separate offer from the Architecture programme offered by the College.

- 2.4 KU has a policy on staff teaching workload that is nine hours per week for professors, 12 hours per week for associate professors and 15 hours per week for assistant professors. Research is encouraged with staff through availability of funds to support approved research (e.g. green roof and transport projects) and sponsorship to attend conferences and workshops. On a Full Time Equivalence (FTE) basis, the staff to student ratio is five FTE staff for 35 students = 1:7, according to the SER. Nonetheless, the Panel studied the CVs of faculty members and notes that the staff profile represents a weighting towards architecture and urban design, with insufficient representation of ID specialization, the exception being healthcare design. This restates the urgency of the recruitment of ID qualified staff, which was identified as an action in the external reviewer report of 2013 to 'Hire faculty with a degree in ID and who have extensive practice in ID. Professors and practitioners who have degrees in ID have a different approach to ID than those with degrees in architecture'. This is further emphasized in CIDA Standard 16, Support and Resources requiring that 'The BID programme must have a sufficient number of qualified faculty members... to achieve programme goals', which the programme is benchmarked against. Therefore, the Panel recommends, as a matter of urgency, that the College develop and implement a recruitment plan to balance the ratio of ID specialist qualified staff delivering the BID programme.
- 2.5 There are clearly stated and well documented policies and procedures for recruitment, appraisal and induction (following recruitment) of academic staff. The Panel studied these policies and procedures and found these to be comprehensive and clear. Staff are familiar with the policy for promotion of academic staff of KU and the procedure is transparent. Over the past five years, one CAED staff had been successful with his application for promotion under this policy, from assistant professor to associate

professor. It was reported that staff needed a PhD degree to be appointed or promoted to assistant professor. Interviewed teaching staff members supported the communication of these policies and procedures to them as well as their application. Newly admitted full-time staff are properly inducted through a formal process and interviewed staff members expressed their satisfaction with the process. Induction sessions are compulsory and in the case of part-time staff who may not be able to attend such sessions they, instead meet with the Dean and Chairperson before commencing with their teaching role. Nonetheless, the Panel encourages KU to support the participation of all part-time staff in the formal induction process. Staff (employee) appraisal procedures are in place and utilized. An integral component is peer review of teaching when peers attend and review classes. Self-appraisal as well as that from appropriate Line Manager are also considered. General satisfaction with these procedures was indicated in meetings with management and staff, who confirmed that teaching staff turnover is moderate and normal for an institution of this type. Despite there having been a weak track record for promotion of CAED teaching staff, the Panel notes with appreciation that the procedures for the recruitment, induction and appraisal of academic staff are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Nonetheless, the Panel suggests that greater attention is devoted by KU to encouraging and supporting promotions as this will positively impact teaching staff recruitment and their retention.

- 2.6 There is a university-wide information management system. Central to this is a universal Learning Management System (LMS). The LMS allows for administration, monitoring and integration across the University, the College and the BID programme. The LMS is a key and effective platform for multi-user interfacing and administration by managers, staff and students, as was demonstrated to the Panel during the site visit. Ample capabilities allow effective generation and distribution of reports with, where relevant, suitable cross-referencing with CILO and PILO frameworks. Students are also able to monitor their progress throughout the academic year, by referring to their instructions inputs to the systems. Managers, teaching staff and students advised that the LMS is useful and effective for their needs where they have access *via* their personal portable and desk-based computers. Students in particular found this system useful for tracking their progress in their courses as their professors had provided this information on the LMS. The Panel appreciates the comprehensive use of the LMS for integration of a range of teaching functions.
- 2.7 The Panel notes that appropriate policies and procedures for security of records and accuracy of results are in place and implemented. Printed copies of the grades are verified and approved by the Department Chairperson and then submitted to the College Dean for verification and approval after these grades are entered and saved by the academic staff in the Edu-gate and before grades are sent to ARD. The implementation of adequate safeguards are also in place to protect the integrity of the

LMS system and its data. KU Back up Procedure requires daily and weekly full backup of records. There is a document tracking procedure in place and hardcopy records of student work and their associated documentation submitted to Panel during site visit were noted to be in proper order and readily accessible. KU policy and procedures for the accuracy of student results are clear and focus on the validity and reliability of assessment; including moderation, appeal process and grievance review. The Panel was advised by management that KU, and therefore the BID programme, did not have a functioning risk management plan, except as provided for with IT. The Panel recommends that a risk management plan is prepared for the Interior Design programme, to set out the coordinated and cost-effective application of resources to minimize, monitor, and control the probability or impact of undesired events, specifically those related to the loss of records or the corruption of results' accuracy.

- 2.8 During the site visit, a comprehensive tour of the physical premises of KU and those utilized by the BID programme was conducted. The Panel notes that overall the KU campus building is modern and generally well laid out. The building is a compact multi-storey structure with basement facilities. Administrative offices, reception areas and related service areas are contemporary in design and well positioned. The amenities, such as the staff and student cafeteria and the nurse station, are suitable for the campus. Students advised that they have good access to the campus after hours. Seminar/lecture rooms are properly furnished and have suitable IT features for instructor and student interaction. The library stocks a range of hardcopy books and journals as well as online access to some electronic databases of books and journals. The Panel was advised by both teaching staff and students that library, IT and Wi-Fi provision are acceptable. However the BID stock appeared to be under-resourced relying heavily on 'how-to' publications rather than more critical texts. The stock should be updated with a recommendation that the College regularly update reading lists and supporting material. There were open-plan academic staff offices, this can be useful for creating a sense of shared and open working however, it must be acknowledged that open-plan offices have specific challenges and that academic focus is varied and staff may require access to more private spaces where confidential discussion may take place, sometimes at very short notice. The Panel suggests that the College revise the office arrangements of the faculty members to ensure its appropriateness to the faculty and students' needs. In addition, the Panel does not consider the current physical studios to be fit for purpose. This concern can also be extended to workshops and computer laboratories. The technology available in both is very limited and thus would be of limited usefulness for contemporary education support. Furthermore, students should normally be allocated a design space with a large drawing table for an entire teaching semester and this is the case with the BID programme at KU except students only occupied a desk in the studio for the allocated teaching hours each week. The impact of a lack of a base, and places to coalesce around the artefacts and theories of the subject domain cannot be underestimated (evidenced

by students anecdotally self-organising and working in corridors and the refectory). The Panel was encouraged to hear of future redevelopment plans to develop the Studio provision but recommends that the College engage fully with the university's campus redevelopment plans and involve a broad base of stakeholders, in particular, students and alumni to ensure that studios, workshops and computer laboratories (both making and IT) are fit for purpose.

- 2.9 KU has a tracking system to determine the usage of laboratories and other resources. The Panel reviewed sample reports of laboratory and library use. These were produced by the propriety technology utilization application, 'Labstats'. This system has wide-ranging potential, which allows for evaluation of the utilisation of these resources. The related procedures allow for the management and monitoring of these facilities while regulating their use. The tracking system is used when making decisions regarding resourcing as it measures logins on laboratories for frequency as well as duration, use of specific applications and by programme major. The system also flags up bottle-necking of resource. Alongside the laboratories tracking system, sits a library access control system measuring visits and duration of stay in the facility. Finally the LMS, which has been mentioned earlier in this Report, is a useful management tool for both staff – administration and teaching - and students to monitor progress in individual courses and therefore overall within the BID programme. The Panel appreciates that procedures related to the tracking of the usage of laboratories and other resources are in place and were demonstrably implemented.
- 2.10 Generally, the Panel notes that there is adequate support for students available in terms of the KU ancillary facilities, such as library, laboratory and e-learning resources. As demonstrated during the Panel's tour of the campus, it was clear that support staff are available and able to provide the necessary guidance and support. Students are able to access e-resources online for their e-learning requirements. Teaching staff advised that they are available on a regular basis for consultations with their students so as to provide guidance and academic support. Graduating students are surveyed annually on a range of eight aspects related to availability and quality of advising and support. Nonetheless, interviewed students were not aware of the range of support services available. Moreover, interviewed alumni indicated that in some cases the level of support provided was not always at a satisfactory level. This was confirmed through the result of the recent exist survey. Support for Student Welfare seems commensurate with systems in place in similar institutions with a Student Support Office handling matters beyond academic development and provides several services to students with special educational needs and physical disabilities. There is also a medical clinic within the university's main building to handle simple health issues of the students and staff members. Notwithstanding the above, discussion with management revealed an absence of a coherent policy and the application of procedure for supporting students who had special needs in terms of access, mobility,

comprehension and learning. The Panel recommends that comprehensive policy and procedure be developed and implemented to address the special needs of both students and staff.

- 2.11 KU has a formal procedure for orienting new students that seek to provide 'new students with the information, resources, assistance and support to adapt to its culture'. This procedure covers administrative and operational aspects of new student orientation and requires orientation at three levels: university, college and programme. At the level of the BID programme, the orientation specifically covered the programme specifications, activities, credit and grading system, pre-requisite to be taken for the courses offered, attendance; training programme and GPA. The academic calendar for 2015-2016 sets aside one day at the beginning of each semester for the induction of students in which they tour the facilities after the completion of the induction programme and the distribution of the orientation kits. In this programme prospective students are introduced to the college's mission and achievements, and the credit and the evaluation systems. The effectiveness of the orientation for new and transfer students was confirmed by the students interviewed during the site visit. The Panel appreciates the provision for and effectiveness of the KU and BID orientation for new students.
- 2.12 The Panel notes that there is monitoring of student progress through a support system that tracks students' progress, where records are kept. The process is guided by the KU Student Advising Procedure. In addition, students at risk of academic failure are identified and flagged for intervention as students in need of enhanced guidance. This process is governed by the KU Student at Risk Policy and operationalized by KU Student at Risk Procedure. Evidence of the tracking and guidance of BID students through this KU process were provided to the Panel indicating that they receive ample guidance, support and encouragement. Overall, the guidance and support of at-risk students is satisfactory.
- 2.13 Informal education is a critical component of university education and perhaps more so with a professional design programme, such as the BID programme. The Panel notes that the opportunities provided for the BID programme students are multi-facetted and include non-formal interaction between students and their instructors as well as informal interactions amongst themselves and not only between those of their narrowly defined cohort. Such informal learning is a major benefit of full-time university education that adds significant value to the educational process and spaces for such interactions are critical to their occurrence and effectiveness. The physical spaces where informal learning occurred were observed to be seating areas in public areas of the campus, the staff and student cafeteria and the library. However, the Panel believes that the studios should be a place for both formal and informal education, where the latter is not possible with the present arrangements. In addition, more

informal spaces are needed in the campus to enhance opportunities for informal education. Nonetheless, informal learning is a feature of education at KU and within the BID programme. It does broaden student experiences as well as their knowledge. A positive sense of the quality of informal learning was gained from separate conversations with both existing students and alumni during the site visit. A range of informal learning opportunities is made available to enhance student education. Significantly, some of these actively engage international participation, offsite exhibition opportunities (such as the KU Architecture and Design Podium at the Bahrain Contemporary Arts Association), international visitors and the KU Winter Practicum. The Panel acknowledges the latter as a strong example of the importance of such models of learning and one which the Panel was enthusiastic about as a clear enhancement to Studio delivery. The Panel appreciates the range of informal learning opportunities offered by KU to enhance student education.

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

- The procedures for the recruitment, induction and appraisal of academic staff are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner.
- There is a learning management system that provides a range of information and reports which are used to improve the teaching functions.
- Procedures related to the tracking of the usage of laboratories and other resources are in place and utilized effectively.
- There is a formal orientation programme for new students that is implemented effectively.
- There is a learning management system that provides a range of information and reports, which are used to improve the teaching functions.

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

- revisit the BID programme ethos and clarify how the programme sets itself up as a distinctive and separate offer from the Architecture programme
- develop and implement a recruitment plan to balance the ratio of ID specialist qualified staff delivering the BID programme
- develop and implement a risk management plan for the BID programme to identify and mitigate different risks
- regularly update the Library stocks to include critical texts and reading lists.
- engage fully with the university's campus redevelopment plans and involve a broad base of stakeholders, in particular, students and alumni to ensure that studios, workshops and computer laboratories (both making and IT) are fit for purpose
- develop and implement comprehensive policy and procedure to address the special needs of both students and staff.

## 2.16 Judgement

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme**.

### 3. Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

- 3.1 The recently formulated 'Graduate Attributes' articulate six clear outcomes with which the graduates of the programme should be competent. Thus, the BID programme is structured to align its aims and ILOs with the graduate attributes. An intent is for graduates to have a high potential for employability locally, regionally and internationally, as well as for acceptance to post graduation programmes of study. A structured assessment strategy is in place for courses including the important studio-based design and drawing courses. Appropriately, for a professional programme, differentiation is made in assessment approach and process between the studio-based design and drawing courses and other courses. There is an overarching policy in place along with associated procedures to manage the programme. The Panel appreciates that graduate attributes are clearly articulated and the programme aims and learning outcome are appropriately mapped to the graduate attributes.
- 3.2 The Panel notes that there are university-level benchmarking policy and procedure in place that seek to position the University for excellence in education, learning, scientific research and community service that is demonstrably comparable with other reputable institutions of higher learning. These seek to integrate a range of benchmark and review undertakings for the overall benefit of the programme and its outcomes. There is a combined benchmarking policy and procedure document that was approved on 23 May 2013. This appears to supersede the benchmarking procedural document of 2012, which was more comprehensive and had a clear delineation of line of authority and responsibilities for managing benchmarking activities covering programme aims, PILOs, CILOs, teaching and learning, assessment and graduate profile. While aspects of the combined policy-procedure document are useful, the Panel is of the view that the present policy and procedure need to be reconsidered, developed and detailed with clear distinguish between the policy and the procedure. The procedures need to be as comprehensive in terms of scope – both breadth and depth – as the superseded procedures. A benchmarking of the programme against the standards of a professional body and ten other institutions was undertaken, mapped and documented. Yet the application of benchmarking appears to be *ad hoc* with limited overt comparative analysis or evidence of specific application of findings to programme validation or improvement. In addition, six external academic experts were engaged to review the BID programme. The Panel studied the provided external reviewers reports and notes that these were very brief and based on questionnaire approach with limited information on how to improve the programme. Moreover, no evidence was provided on mapping these questionnaire responses or how they impacted the BID programme revision. The Panel did not also find any evidence of

continuous and rigorous and importantly, formal benchmarking, which is an important component for programme development and demonstration of programme standing. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should formally benchmark the programme against professional body criteria and leading international, regional and national ID programmes on a regular basis and expand the benchmarking activities to include the teaching and learning methods, learning resources and students' standards.

- 3.3 The policy and procedure at the university level for assessment of student work are interrelated with the KU policy and procedure for teaching and learning and these are comprehensive and cover many important aspects related to assessment of student work and thus provide a solid framework for students, instructors, assessors and moderators, if followed. Faculty are primarily responsible for the implementation of the existing assessment policy and procedures including KU Avoiding Plagiarism Policy & Procedure and to ensure that the criteria and process used for assessing student work is fair, transparent and consistent, and the students are informed about the marking plan well ahead. To support compliance there is University-level Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (UTLAC) and a similar committee at the college level, CTLAC. The Panel notes that suitable university moderation procedures are in place for appropriate general application to written examinations. Importantly, these procedural outlines are sufficient and appropriate for the conduct of written midterm and final examinations but do not deal sufficiently with other forms of assessment such as the important design-based examinations, during which students present their design proposals supported by drawings and models. While the Panel viewed some samples of assessors' feedback to students on their work, it was also noted that in many instances this feedback was cursory and in places inadequate. The value of feedback is further weakened where, for some courses, the criteria for assessment are unclear. These observations by the Panel were confirmed by clear and strong advice from the external moderators. The Panel recommends that assessment policies and procedures are consistently implemented and monitored and that assessment criteria for all forms of assessment are detailed and clear.
- 3.4 The policy and procedural framework for assessment of student work provides for the alignment of assessment of student outcomes and the stated ILOs, both programme and course ILOs. According to the SER, each part of the assessment is aligned with a CILO, which is measured through student work using different methods of formative and summative assessments. Each form of assessment is given different weight depending on the nature of the course and the delivery methods. The LMS Grade Book is used to demonstrate the student achievement of both CILOs and PILOs numerically and the minimum level of grade required to attain a CILO is 60%. There are also requirements that course assessment is moderated, both internally and externally. Internal assessment alignment procedures are in place, which is overseen by CTLAC,

which in turn is under the UTLAC. To ensure that the criteria and process used for assessing student work is fair, transparent and consistent, the students are informed about the marking plan well ahead. The Panel appreciates that there are mechanisms to ensure that assessment is aligned with the course and programme ILOs to meet the academic standards of the graduates.

- 3.5 There are internal moderation procedures in place. From the review of the course samples, it is apparent that the internal moderation process is generally implemented. A key component of this is internal moderation of final examination papers, where internal moderation may have required modification of the examination paper. Such moderation is under the direction and instruction of the Chair of the CTLAC. Post-examination moderation is conducted on samples of student answers under the supervision of the UTLAC. Moreover, final design juries comprise three jury members, with each juror contributing to the moderation of a final assessment for each student. Although the Panel acknowledges that the internal moderation systems are in place for both theory courses and design courses, the implementation of these is not satisfactory. Samples provided indicate that in some courses there are shortcomings with the application of assessment criteria and that the assessment structures and weights are not appropriate for the course levels and types. Nonetheless, these shortcomings were not identified by the internal moderators. The Panel recommends that the College strengthen its internal moderation system and develop a mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of this system and use the outcome to improve upon it.
- 3.6 Policy, procedure and supporting processes for the external moderation of student work are generally satisfactory. Courses and their assessments are subjected to independent review on the basis of 25% of the courses under examination each semester. From viewing sample course material and as advised by teaching faculty, the operationalization of these is largely acceptable. In addition, interviewed external moderators indicated that the process for external moderation is functioning to an adequate level. Nonetheless, during interview sessions the Panel confirmed that the current practice of selecting external moderators does not follow the formally approved procedures. Moreover, the Panel studied the current list of external moderators and notes that it lacks in academic seniority and internationalism and not in line with the Assessment Moderation Procedures. The Panel recommends that the College reconsider the list of external moderators and follow its formal selection procedure. In addition, the Panel acknowledges that the policy and procedure for inclusion of an external juror in each pre-jury and final jury for design-based projects is required and followed, however the Panel has a concern that internalizing the external moderation within the internal assessment process removes the independence that external moderation requires to be effective. It is the firm view of the Panel that the absence of overt external moderation for studio-design courses is a major contributing factor to the poor quality of design output by students in the BID

programme (see section 3.7). The Panel recommends that the College revise the moderation procedures for design courses to require independent external moderation of all the assessments decided by design juries.

- 3.7 The programme is a professional design programme in the field of ID with a range of theory and design courses. While all courses are important, the central education for graduates of such programme is the design. All other courses inform, support and collaborate with the over-riding central professional theme of design. This is as it is at leading ID programmes globally and should be the case with the BID programme. With this clearly in mind, the Panel reviewed samples of students' work for their theory courses and the related assessments. Similarly, the Panel reviewed samples of assessed design work by students from their design-studio courses. While the Panel advises that it had misgivings concerning the low quality of students' assessed work for some theory courses, especially those related to technology, the gravest concern was with the poor quality of the students' design work. The Panel is concerned that the level of the provided samples of the assessed design work is uniformly inadequate because the scales of presentation are too large, construction and detailing considerations are lacking and there are little contextual considerations. This, in the Panel view, is due to the absence of a comprehensive, dedicated and qualified ID teaching staff (see 2.4); the weakness of the external moderation of students' design work by independent external moderators (see 3.6); and the need for a more senior and diverse panel of external moderators (see 3.6). In addition, the Panel observes the absence of a distinct professional focus on the profession of ID within the College, an issue highlighted by the students and alumni during the interview sessions. In summation, the Panel recommends that the specific identified shortcomings be addressed as noted in paragraphs 2.4 and 3.6 of this Report.
- 3.8 The capstone course for the BID programme is its Graduation Project. This course presents the opportunity for the final year students to demonstrate their mastery of the profession of ID. The design proposal presented should have demonstrated the student's comprehension of the design problem in its physical context with clear understanding of the interrelated social, cultural, environmental, financial and technological constraints and opportunities. Based on these a design philosophy and strategy is articulated, from which a detailed design is derived and presented. The ID Graduation Project is a synthesis of all of a student's preceding design education together with the student's education through many theoretical courses. This capstone course also requires the student to have described the design graphically in two and three dimensions. Finally, the student has to articulate the qualities of the design proposal orally and to have defended the design with the design jury. Unquestionably, the ID Graduation Project is the primary indicator for the level of achievement of the graduates of the BID programme. The Panel reviewed the provided samples of the Graduation Projects and found the level of achievement to be unacceptable where the

weaknesses in design relate to those noted for the assessed design work in section 3.7. This was confirmed through meeting with alumni, where they stated their difficulty in finding suitable professional employment after graduation and the BID programme failed to fully prepare them for professional practice, a shortcoming confirmed by another key stakeholder, during the site visit meeting with the Employer and Internship supervisor. These stakeholder views, though from a small sample, confirm the view of the Panel. The Panel recommends that the College revise the programme's capstone project delivery and assessment mechanisms to ensure that the level of graduate achievement is adequate for the programme type and level.

- 3.9 The SER provides some records of analyses of cohort data for four academic years starting from the academic year 2007-2008. The data reveals significant variation in cohort size as there was no intake to the BID programme in academic year 2011-2012. Another influence on cohort size was the lack of intake to BSAE programme for three academic years, 2011-2014. There were transfers between the BID and BSAE programmes related to these events. There were 24 fulltime students admitted to the programme in 2012-2013, 25 in 2013-2014 and 11 in 2014-2015. The resultant total number of students in the programme was 31, 44 and 35, respectively. The Panel notes that there were four graduates from the programme in academic year 2013-2014 and two in 2014-2015, with a total of 10 graduates over the past five years. Given the variations in the intakes and the low graduation numbers, it is not possible to comment on the student retention rates. The Panel advises that the significant variations in fulltime enrolments and especially the very low numbers of graduates does not allow a meaningful comparison with other ID programmes.
- 3.10 An essential component of the programme is its assessed work-based learning which is the training (internship) component that comprises 200 working hours in the summer semester. There is a guiding procedure at the university level where students are expected to consult with their academic advisor to select a suitable host organization for the work-based training. Each student has an academic supervisor for the training, which is over four phases. The student is visited at the place of internship by the supervisor. The student prepares and submits reports on their internship. At the conclusion of the work-based learning, each student presents her/his report. The assessment of the work-based learning is based on the reports, the supervisor visits and the final report presentation. On reviewing the evidence and as advised by management, students and stakeholders during the site visit, the Panel acknowledges the effectiveness and importance of the internship but urges that its duration is insufficient by international standards as noted in paragraph 1.6 of this Report.
- 3.11 The Panel notes that the programme does not have a dissertation, thesis or industry project component and that its equivalent in this professional design programme is the graduation project. KU has clear policies and procedures, which state the

responsibilities and duties of academic advisors, projects supervisors and students. CAED has also developed through CTLAC its own Graduation Project Guidelines to cater for design-based projects. Students have to complete at least 125 credit hours including prerequisites to register for the graduation project. 25% of the final mark is awarded by the project supervisor, 15% by pre-jury and 60% by a final Jury consists of two faculty members and one external examiner. The Panel acknowledges that the policies, procedures and project guidelines are comprehensive and followed. Nonetheless, the Panel's interviews with alumni revealed dissatisfactions with the graduation project procedures and support throughout the phases of graduation project. The Panel also has misgivings concerning the poor quality of the students' design work and the external moderation for design-based projects, as noted in 3.6 and 3.7.

- 3.12 CAED has an Industry Advisory Council (IAC) that operates under clearly stated terms of reference. IAC has nine members, of which six are from industry and government. Of these, two are KU alumni and one teaching staff from the BID programme. IAC is slated to meet every semester to advise and support the programmes of the College, to effect liaison between the College and the larger community and to offer views on the development of the College and its activities. The Panel reviewed sample of minutes of meetings of the Council and met with its members during the site visit. The minutes show signed attendance and a record of the main points raised during the meeting, which are appropriate for the guidance on the development of the programme. IAC members advised the Panel that they chose to sit on the Council so as to serve the College and the University. They sought to bring what the professional market needs to the attention of the College, thus shaping and forming the programme curricula to better meet the needs of Bahrain. The Panel appreciates the presence of a pro-active advisory council providing useful inputs into future programme development.
- 3.13 Meetings with employers and internship supervisors were limited in scope. Both groups were supportive of the programme and of student capabilities but the overall impression from stakeholders was that the quality of experience is inconsistent and not specifically and broadly representative of ID practice. During meeting with alumni, the Panel was informed about difficulties in finding employment due to graduates lacking essential professional and technical skills. Nonetheless, with a total of 10 graduates from the programme over the past five years, the Panel was not able to form a definitive view on the graduate and employer satisfaction with their programme.

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

- Graduate attributes are clearly articulated and the programme aims and learning outcome are appropriately mapped to the graduate attributes.
- There are mechanisms to ensure that assessment is aligned with the course and programme intended learning outcomes to meet the academic standards of the graduates.
- There is a pro-active advisory council that meets regularly and provides useful inputs into future programme development.

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

- formally benchmark the programme against professional body criteria and leading ID programmes on a regular basis, and expand the benchmarking activities to include the teaching and learning methods, learning resources and students' standards
- consistently implement and monitor the assessment policies and procedures and ensure that assessment criteria for all forms of assessment are detailed and clear
- strengthen the internal moderation system and develop mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of this system and use the outcome to improve upon it
- reconsider the list of external moderators and follow the formal selection procedure for external moderators
- revise the moderation procedures for design courses to require independent external moderation of all the assessments decided by design juries
- revise the programme's capstone project delivery and assessment mechanisms to ensure that the level of graduate achievement is adequate for the programme type and level

### 3.16 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **does not satisfy** the Indicator on **Academic Standards of the Graduates**.

#### **4. 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.*

- 4.1 The institution's policies, procedures and regulations are widely published in the University By-laws, University Employee Handbook, University Student Handbook, and are disseminated in the College to staff and students from the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Office (AQAO). The dissemination of policies and procedures in general appears to be effective and is overseen and monitored by the Dean of the College and the Chairperson of ID Department. The Panel met with representatives from the Institute's Quality Assurance Unit who confirmed that the policies and procedures are applied consistently. College Council decisions and documentation are communicated to stakeholders *via* email, face-to-face meetings, digital and analogue notice-boards, intranet and social media. Training workshops for academic and support staff are conducted when necessary, new staff undergo induction *via* the University Induction Programme and students receive the Handbook *via* the Standard Orientation Programme with evolving updates additions or edits being circulated using a variety of methods including email, intranet and notice board announcements. The Panel appreciates that institutional policies and regulations are engaged with adopted, acknowledged, widely published and effectively applied across the programme.
- 4.2 The Departmental Chairperson (Programme Manager) as outlined in the job description is the key position in terms of programme management, with the role encompassing academic leadership, responsibility for programme development and innovation as well as the management deployment and development of faculty and bridging programme requirements with college and university strategy *via* the Dean. The Chairperson also has custodianship over programme marketing and is responsible for ensuring relevance of the offer to students and providing excellence in their experience. Furthermore, the Chairperson also engages with support staff in matters of student support, retention and academic progression. Nevertheless, as discussed in paragraph 2.3 of this Report, the BID programme is perceived to be operating 'in the shadow' of the Architecture programme with the current paucity of specifically ID educated or practicing faculty members represented in the programme team. The Panel is of the view that although some tasks were managed more effectively than others, the overall judgment was that the leadership of the Chairperson was positive, in the pursuit of academic excellence for the BID programme. The Panel acknowledges that the BID programme is positively managed with dynamic and engaged staff.

- 4.3 The Quality Management System (QMS) is managed by AQAO, which has responsibility for the consistent implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the QMS. Structurally its implementation is defined at the university and college levels and the relevant committees; UQAC and CQAC monitor and ensure continuous improvement and direct quality assurance matters outwards for university, college and to programme level consideration. The Panel notes with appreciation that the CQAC incorporates the student voice albeit by invitation and that this is recorded. The AQAO undertook an academic internal review of the compliance with programme policies and procedures at the college and department levels, in March 2014. The outcomes of this review were communicated to the Chairperson, the Dean and the CQAC, which facilitated programme enhancement in areas including governance, teaching, learning, assessment, student support and course portfolio, with the production of an action plan. An unannounced follow-up event was conducted in July of that year to take stock of improvements based on recommendations. There are further reviews scheduled for this academic session underpinned by robust committee and audit procedures. Documents and records are monitored on a central university register, controlled with alterations, both major and minor, scrutinized and approved by relevant committees. The Panel appreciates the comprehensive QA consistent implementation and that the CQAC incorporates the student voice.
- 4.4 From interviews conducted with senior and junior staff, the Panel is confident that the team has a clear understanding of the internal quality assurance system. This level of awareness is underpinned by the availability of staff training organized primarily by AQAO. These workshops include training on pedagogy as well as broader quality issues including assurance and enhancement. Examples of training workshops include 'Embedding Employability Skills in Higher Education Curriculum' which was offered in June 2015 in association with the British Council and was attended by the Dean, the Chairperson, professors, associate professors and lecturers on the BID programme. In addition to such workshops the University has a Staff Induction Policy. This introduces all staff, both academic and administrative to the academic culture of the University and its particular policies and procedures and the quality assurance system adopted by the University and the programme. The Panel is satisfied that staff teams receive adequate and appropriate support from the institution in relation to the University internal QA system.
- 4.5 The procedure for the introduction and development of new programmes begins with identification of demand. This is followed by a discussion at University Council and the commissioning of a feasibility study, which the Council either approves or rejects. If approved a New Academic Programme Development Committee (NAPDC) is established to develop the detailed proposal. The role of this committee is clearly defined. There are adequate checks and balances indicated within the procedure's outlines to inform adjustments to main programme specifications such as the PILOs

and ensure alignment with broader university policies with proposals being filtered by Dean, UPRDC then to University Council and on to the President Office, after which it is submitted to the HEC for licensing. In order to ensure market relevance a market research is undertaken by the NAPDC and specific 'offer' quality is determined and benchmarked regionally with commentary received from local, regional and international academic and industry reviewers. The Panel considers that procedures and policies for the development of a new programme are robust and clear.

- 4.6 The Programme Review Procedure outlines the process for semester, annual and the five-year periodical review for all programmes offered by the University. The process is differentiated based on the scope of the review. End of semester reviews involve the Departmental Chairperson, Departmental Council and College Programme Review and Development Committee (CPRDC) and overseen by CQAC and AQAO with annual reviews being led by the College Dean. The process covers minor and major changes to programmes, including additions of departments and programmes, changes in the name of programmes, and changes to credit weightings. The Panel notes that the procedure allows for the frequent and diligent maintenance of the programme. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the view that the provided samples of improvement plans as these pertain to the BID programme, had little indication of implementation procedures, clear definable target dates and clear measurable results for evaluation. The Panel recommends that the College review its improvement plans as these pertain to BID programme for detailed/analysis, evaluation and effective implementation within one year.
- 4.7 There is an institutional policy indicating that programmes are periodically reviewed every five years. These reviews incorporate – programme specifications, review study plans, resource implications, both internal and external feedback, external moderation issues, benchmarking against other comparable programmes and stakeholders surveys. The processes and procedures for the implementation of recommended improvements are clear and overseen by the Chairperson, ID Department Committee, Dean, IAC, CPRDC and AQAO. The Panel notes that these procedures, which accommodate robust input from external stakeholders, were followed during the last major BID programme review of 2014-2015. The Panel appreciates that the programme engages with relevant feedback generated by alumni and industry during major programme reviews.
- 4.8 The University operates an Internal Research Procedure, which is overseen by the AQAO alongside the Institutional Measurement Unit. Feedback mechanisms include Course Evaluation Surveys, Student Satisfaction Surveys and Senior Exit surveys. The Panel considers the mechanisms and procedures for gathering feedback to be appropriate, however the Panel was not provided with clear explanation on how the outcomes of these surveys inform programme development and amendments.

Moreover, the SER makes reference to critical feedback but fails to confirm how this was responded to, if at all. The recent senior exit survey did indicate some poor/mixed results relating to academic support, advising and counselling; also professional preparation in the programme. However, no action plan was provided on how to address these findings. The Panel recommends that the College develop a mechanism to utilize the outcome of the stakeholder surveys in improving the programme and its outcomes.

- 4.9 There are processes and procedures to identify necessary Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff in the University and College. CPD can be undertaken within the context of the University, but equally external specialist ID exposure to current international professional issues is important to ensure currency breadth and depth in teaching and learning on the programme. Staff professional development needs are identified by the Chairperson and supported, if there are sufficient funds and the timing is appropriate. For staff participation at quality conferences, there are a series of clear procedures that have to be undertaken for approval and upon return tutors are required to make a presentation to their peers. The Panel was encouraged to see that collaborative links to international universities are being explored and practicums in Manama, Athens, and Derby have been successful which may lead to staff/students exchanges and possible joint ventures in the future. The Panel discussed in detail the arrangements for CPD and appreciates that academic staff are supported with appropriate CPD and research opportunities, but cautions that staff training is not simply reactive (i.e. responding to shortfalls or deficits) but is also truly developmental. What is unclear is how staff, and in particular fractional staff initiate and are given time to undertake an element of development that they self-determine. Therefore, the Panel encourages the College to continue to develop CPD opportunities for academic staff in a culture of proactive as well as reactive development.
- 4.10 The SER states that the IAC solicits commentary from industry advisors on the current market and monitors how this evolves. This is conducted alongside Employer Surveys and Alumni Surveys, the most recent of which was conducted during the spring and summer of 2015. Respondents are asked to comment on how the various key aims of the programme, for example intellectual ability, communication skills and teamwork have benefited their employability. Results from these are recorded and minuted at the IAC with a view to informing future programme development. The Panel acknowledges the importance of these devices in fostering direct engagement with the regional industry landscape. Nonetheless, in recognition of the current low cohort numbers, the Panel recommends that that the College formally scope the industry needs and that this process is conducted in a rigorous manner, which is cognisant of national, regional and international opportunities and developments.

4.11 In coming to its conclusion regarding the Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

- There is a range of institutional policies and regulations that are widely published and effectively applied across the programme.
- There is a comprehensive internal QA system that incorporates the students voice and is consistently implemented.
- The programme engages with relevant feedback generated by alumni and industry during major programme reviews.
- Staff are supported with appropriate continuing professional development and research opportunities.

4.12 In terms of improvement, the Panel **recommends** that the Department should:

- review the college improvement plans as these pertain to BID for detailed/analysis, evaluation and implementation
- develop a mechanism to utilize the outcome of the stakeholder surveys in improving the programme and its outcomes
- formally scope industry needs and conduct this process in a rigorous manner, cognisant of national, regional and international opportunities and developments.

#### 4.13 **Judgement**

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

## 5. 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, 2014*:

**There is limited confidence in the Bachelor in Interior Design of College of Architectural Engineering and Design offered by the Kingdom University.**