



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

Higher Education Review Unit

Programme Review Report

Bachelor of Law

Kingdom University

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 26 - 28 October 2010

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1. The Programme Review Process

1.1 The Programme Review Framework

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

Indicator 1: The Curriculum

Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates

Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance

Conclusions reached are in terms of minimum standards, and the summative judgment falls into one of three categories:

- (i) *The programme satisfies all four indicators and gives confidence, or*
- (ii) *There is limited confidence because up to two indicators are not satisfied, or*
- (iii) *There is no confidence in the programme because more than two indicators are not satisfied.*

1.2 The programme review process at the Kingdom University

The programme review of the Bachelor of Law (BL) at the Kingdom University (hereinafter referred to as 'KU', the 'institution' or 'University') was conducted by the Higher Education Review Unit (HERU) of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET) in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. This report provides an account of the HERU programme review process and the findings of the Review Panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and appendices submitted by the KU, the supplementary documentation made available during the site visit, as well as interviews and observations made during the review site visit that took place on 26-28 October 2010.

KU was notified by HERU/QAAET that it would be subject to a programme quality review of its BL programme and that a site visit would be made on 26 - 28 October 2010. In preparation for the programme review, KU conducted its programme self-evaluation and submitted a SER with appendices on the agreed date in March 2010.

KU was founded in 2001, and began offering higher education programmes in 2004. Currently, the University comprises five Colleges, namely: College of Arts, College of Business Administration, College of Engineering, College of Computing and Information Technology, and College of Law.

The College of Law offers two academic programmes for students, namely Associate Diploma, and Bachelor of Law (BL). The study at the College of Law started in December 2005.

The number of students registered in the BL programme for the academic year 2009/2010 was 129 students, of whom 33 students were admitted in the first year, 35 students enrolled in the second year, 26 in the third year, and 35 in the fourth year.

2. Indicator 1: Curriculum

The programme complies with existing regulations in terms of the curriculum, the teaching, and the assessment of students' achievements; the curriculum demonstrates fitness for purpose

- 2.1 The programme has clearly articulated objectives that are consistent with the institution's mission, and which are designed to achieve the knowledge and skills that meet the relevant labour market needs in Bahrain. However, the Review Panel noted that the programme objectives focus on issues related to lawyer or judge careers. They do not clearly cover all outcomes, considering that a large number of Law graduates are employed in other places.
- 2.2 The intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the programme are appropriately articulated and are consistent with the programme objectives. However, the ILOs are not clearly reflected in most of the programme courses. The Review Panel noted that the majority of courses are documented in the files. Their teaching hours are specified and distributed over semester weeks. The course file includes everything related to the course throughout the semester. However, although the ILOs are mentioned, there are no clear methods for measuring these outcomes, whether at the programme level as a whole or at the level of each individual course.
- 2.3 The programme follows the credit hours system comprising 46 courses with 3 credit hours for each course. The total number of compulsory courses is 40 with only two elective courses; 9 credit hours of the compulsory courses are allocated for the internship.
- 2.4 Most of the programme courses lead to an expansion of student's legal knowledge, develop cognitive and professional skills, and polish their understanding and analytical ability in order to develop their legal mentality, consistent with the learning outcomes of the programme. However, the Review Panel noted the absence of a course basic for the academic preparation of the Law student, which is the Principles of Economics. It is worth noting that almost all the external reviewers' reports that the College used to assess its programme agreed on the need to add Principles of Economics as a compulsory course subject for its significance and because it is a basic pre-requisite for General Finance and Financial legislation. The College has included the course, within the elective courses, in its recently amended programme. However, given the small number of elective courses (two courses), this reduces the opportunity for students to take the Finance course. The Review Panel is of the view that the programme needs to ensure the offering of this core subject. Moreover, the Panel also considers there is a need to include a course on methods of scientific research within the mandatory courses in an early stage of the programme.
- 2.5 The Review Panel noted the paucity of elective courses compared to the number of compulsory ones. Moreover, and from the discussions with the faculty members,

graduates, and students, the Review Panel recognized that the opportunity for student to choose the two electives is limited as the College only offers those two electives preferred by the majority of students.

- 2.6 Basic University requisites, include 8 compulsory courses, which are good overall except the course 'Study Skills', and which has been dropped recently. Therefore, it is advisable to add a compulsory course useful for students' preparation, considering that the discussion with students revealed that both the courses English for Academic Purposes 1 and English for Academic Purposes 2 are just meant to teach English language without any legal academic content. Both alumni and employers indicated during interview sessions that the programme would benefit from adding some legal courses taught in English.
- 2.7 The Review Panel is of the view that it might be appropriate to add a number of courses the study of which are acquiring increased significance. Most of these courses were recommended by the external reviewers.
- 2.8 The programme contains a training and internship requirement where students spend one semester at courts, the Office of the Attorney General, some lawyers' offices, or companies. At the end of this period, a student is expected to report upon their experience to their colleagues and lecturers. Most of the graduates and employers appreciated the significance of such training. However, some expressed the desire for more robust follow-up of training, especially at lawyers' offices in order to ensure optimal benefit for students. The Review Panel recognized that internship provides a good opportunity for students' employment at their training places after graduating. The Review Panel is of the view that allocating 3 credit hours for internship is a reasonable rule that most College of Law use when following the credit hour system. Hence, allocating 8 or even 6 credit hours for internship, as the College of Law does, is not in line with prevailing practice.
- 2.9 The College does not have physical space for the Moot Court, and student practice virtual trials for the course, Criminal Procedures. The Review Panel is of the view that embedding simulation systems in general, and the Moot Court in particular, within a reasonable number of legal courses for students to practice in groups and work teams would be useful. Among the good practice the Review Panel noted is the external activity which makes students aware of legal systems and practices not only in the Kingdom of Bahrain but also outside it. This is done through visits to courthouses and legislation authorities; meeting political and executive officials; and visiting other colleges of Law, meeting their staff members and students, and exploring their libraries.
- 2.10 Teaching and learning methods rely heavily on traditional lectures with one or more textbooks being prescribed. Other methods, such as presentations and electronic interactions, are rarely used. Nevertheless, it was recognized from the discussions

with students and graduates that students are given the opportunity to discuss and interact with lecturers during the lectures.

2.11 Student assessment is based on four core aspects the first of which includes class activity, oral questions, attendance, and follow-up; 10% of the total mark is allocated for this aspect. The second relates to research, which is allocated another 10% of the total mark. Then there is the mid-semester examination, which is allocated 30% of the total mark; and lastly, the final examination, which is allocated 50% of the total mark.

2.12 Among the good practice the Review Panel observed is the recognition of the student's right to be given their answer sheets of the mid-semester examination in order to find out their mistakes. In addition, students are given the opportunity to discuss their answers with the course lecturer in order to identify their weaknesses.. Students are also entitled to appeal against their final examination score. The Review Panel examined the appeals record and confirmed reviews of students' appeals in this regard.

2.13 In coming to its conclusions regarding the curriculum, the Review Panel noted, with appreciation, the following:

- The programme has clearly articulated objectives that are aligned to the institution's mission and objectives
- Programme Intended Learning Outcomes are identified and in line with programme objectives
- The Programme contains a training course that expands over an entire semester, and is followed up and evaluated
- There is a system that allows students to familiarise themselves with the graded examination answer sheets to identify their weaknesses.

2.14 In terms of improvement, the Review Panel recommends that the College should:

- Review and expand the scope of the programme objectives to include requirements of other market needs besides lawyers and judges
- Identify course ILOs for all the programme courses, and develop the method of ILOs assessment at the programme as well the course levels
- Encourage the use of modern teaching methods
- Develop a balance between compulsory and elective courses considering that there are only 6 credit hours allocated for the elective courses out of the total number of 138 credit hours of the programmes

- Improve students opportunities to select elective courses
- Ensure that students are offered both courses of Principles of Economics and Legal Research Methodology
- Support the programme by courses aligned to recent developments in the field of Law
- Offer legal courses that are delivered in English as compulsory or elective courses
- Develop examination standards and align them to the ILOs in order to measure students' acquisition of the cognitive and professional skills in addition to knowledge and understanding.

2.15 **Judgment**

On balance, the Review Panel concludes that the programme does not satisfy the indicator on the Curriculum.

3. Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

The programme efficiency depends the availability of adequate number of human resources qualified for teaching, the availability of adequate resources and appropriate equipment that support students learning, the method adopted in student enrolment in the programme being aligned with programme objectives, and the ratio of admitted students to successful graduates.

- 3.1 The admission requirements of the programme are to have the General Secondary Certificate 'tawjihiah' (GSC) or its equivalent whether in the scientific, literary, or commercial stream. The number of students who directly enrolled in the programme from secondary school for the 2009-2010 academic year was 100 whereas the number who came from intermediate education (other colleges) was 29, i.e. 22.5% of the total number of students. However, the College does not require a specific minimum grade for the GCS but rather admits students who pass with any grade. There were 10 students admitted whose GSC was not more than 60% and half of them had only scored 50% varying between literary and commercial streams.
- 3.2 The teaching of most of the BL programme courses is carried out by two academic departments, namely: Public Law Department and Private Law Department. The total number of faculty members in the College is seven, none of whom had a Professor title. Instead, there was one Associate Professor, five Assistant Professors, and one lecturer holding a Master's degree. All faculty members are full-time.
- 3.3 The Review Panel notes that the number of faculty members is insufficient to cover the College's overall academic requirements considering that their narrow fields of specialization do not enable them teach many courses competently. The College's data indicate that some of the faculty members teach courses that are beyond their special academic fields.
- 3.4 Faculty members' teaching load ranges between 12 to 15 teaching hours per week, and sometimes goes up to 18 teaching hours. Compared to other Colleges of Law, this workload is high. Moreover, faculty members are also in charge of academic advising and some of them have administrative duties, such as the College Dean, Head of Department, or Quality Assurance Unit Director.
- 3.5 As per faculty members' promotions, the Review Panel was informed that the University has adopted a special promotion system and that some of the faculty members have submitted their research papers for promotion in accordance with this system but none of them had been promoted yet. Also, the Review Panel found that the College does not have graduate teaching assistants and it does not have a scholarship scheme for its distinguished graduates or others to study abroad in preparation to meet the College's future needs for Bahraini faculty members.

- 3.6 The Review Panel observed that the physical resources to support the programme were not sufficient for this purpose; the temporary premises of the University with its five Colleges is situated on top of commercial shops and the teaching halls as well as the computer rooms serve all the Colleges. The Review Panel noted modern data display equipment in a number of the teaching halls but heard during discussions with students, graduates and lecturers, that these are rarely used.
- 3.7 With regard to the legal library of the College, the Review Panel found that the library area is too limited with a very small number of legal and economic references despite them representing the majority of the library holdings. The library does not have subscriptions to legal periodicals either in Arabic or in foreign languages and whether by traditional or electronic mode of subscription. In addition, there is no subscription to internationally recognized legal databases. The library is not sufficient to cover the Bachelor students' requirements for conducting research. Furthermore, it does not satisfy the needs of the faculty members.
- 3.8 The University provides internet access for faculty members and students inside the College building, in the library, and in lecturers' offices. There is an electronic portal, which includes useful information about the College and University; however, students cannot be enrolled in the programme remotely and there is no stated and regular means for electronic communication between students and lecturers.
- 3.9 Every registered student is assigned an academic advisor who assists them when difficulties in their studies are encountered. The Review Panel noted the faculty members' commitment to their stated office hours and their availability to enable students to benefit from meeting their academic advisors. However, the academic advisor's role is compromised because of the small number of elective courses offered in the programme.
- 3.10 In coming to its conclusion regarding the efficiency of the programme, the Review Panel noted, with appreciation, the following:
- There is good communication between the faculty members and their students as revealed by interviews with students, graduates, and employers' representatives
 - The College pays due attention for office hours and academic advising system
 - Internet access is available for the faculty members and students inside the College building, and in the library
- 3.11 In terms of improvement, the Review Panel recommends that the College should:
- Review the programme's admission policy and develop clear criteria for accepting qualified students

- Ensure that there are sufficient and appropriately qualified faculty to teach on the programme, also have some faculty members who are capable of teaching legal courses in English
- Ensure that faculty members do not teach courses outside their fields of specialization
- Review faculty members' teaching loads
- Accelerate the new premises for the College within a purpose-built University campus so that students enjoy an appropriate learning environment
- Provide a place for the Moot Court in the College and not restrict training in this court within the sub-field Penalty Law alone
- Address the deficiency of the library in terms of space and the lack of sufficient references and periodicals related to legal and economic subjects whether in Arabic or other languages; and address the lack of subscription to the big electronic databases.

3.12 Judgment

On balance, the Review Panel concludes that the programme does not satisfy the indicator on the efficiency of the programme.

4. Indicator 3: Academic standards of the graduates

The graduates of the programme meet acceptable academic standards in comparison with equivalent programmes in Bahrain and worldwide.

- 4.1 The academic standards of the programme are clearly identified consistent with the programme objectives and ILOs defined in the programme descriptions. There are no national academic standards for Colleges of Law in the Kingdom of Bahrain; therefore, the College was diligent to trace other universities in this area, such as the University of Bahrain, and Amman National University in Jordan. It also sought advice from a number of Arab authoritative scholars of Law. However, the Panel is of the view that the programme can benefit from expanding this benchmarking activities to include standards adopted by distinguished international universities and those standards approved in some Arab countries.
- 4.2 There is an appropriate system in place for assessing students' results. The system does not rely on one single examination held at the end of the semester but rather assesses student's performance at a number of stages. Student assessment takes place in four aspects: activity, oral questions, attendance, and follow-up, all of which are allocated 10% of the total mark; research is allocated 10%; the mid-semester examination is allocated 10%; and the final examination is allocated 50%.
- 4.3 Reviewing samples of corrected examination sheets provided by the institution, the Panel noted the seriousness of most of these examinations and the rigorous grading of the answers. However, the Panel was concerned they were mostly restricted to essay questions only, and do not go beyond questions like: Explain., Define..., Identify... Nevertheless, there is a small proportion of examination questions in some courses that measure student's ability of critical thinking, and discussing cases. However, this is insufficient. The Panel encourages the College to revise its assessment strategy to allow for the assessment of higher level learning outcomes so that it measures student's competency, in terms of their acquisition of cognitive and practical skills rather than mainly measuring their ability to acquire theoretical knowledge.
- 4.4 After both the mid-semester and the final examinations, students are given the chance to see their answer sheets to find their weaknesses and discuss them with the lecturer within the scope of systematic procedures that are based on justice and transparency. Graduates and students appreciated the opportunities they are given to discuss and interact with lecturers during the lectures and through pre-announced office hours.
- 4.5 The SER indicates that the final results and marks distribution shows lecturers alignment to the standards the College adopts in assessment and evaluation methods. However, on studying the submitted data, the Panel found that 20.8% of

the graduates scored Excellent GPA; 24.5% scored Very Good GPA; 50.9% scored Good GPA; and 2 students scored Satisfactory GPA, i.e. 3.8% of the total number of graduates. The Review Panel is of the view that these results tend to be particularly high and are not in alignment with the assessment standards in other Colleges of Law. Moreover they are not in line with the admitted students' profiles and their high school achievements. The Panel is concerned that this might indicate grade inflation and suggests the College that review this matter.

- 4.6 Students submit research work within two frameworks: (i) through course work which holds 10% of the total marks of a course work; (ii) through final year research project. The Review Panel found that generally the research attached to courses is very weak in standard; it lacks a clear methodology; it deals only with topics from the course syllabus; heavily relies on a limited number of references, which are quoted literally and might not be included in the list of references; and does not try to provide any conclusion, recommendations, or suggestions.
- 4.7 The Panel also reviewed samples of final year (graduation) research and found a number of distinguished graduation research abiding by the legal research methodology in addition to the seriousness and authenticity in presenting their topics. The College uses an external examiner for the discussion of each graduation research to ensure that students' achievements are similar to their peers in other colleges.
- 4.8 The programme contains a training and internship requirement where the student is asked to give a PowerPoint presentation following the period of the external training. Most of the students and the graduates confirmed the usefulness of this experience. Moreover, students are exposed to visits to courthouses and legislation authorities, meeting political and executive officials and visiting other colleges of Law in and outside the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- 4.9 There is adequate communication between the College and its graduates. However, there is no systematic mechanism to follow up on graduates, such as an alumni chapter.
- 4.10 From the analysis of the data mentioned in the SER about graduates' employment, it was found that 32.5% who graduated joined the legal labour market immediately after their graduation. This percentage is not high considering the labour market conditions in the Kingdom of Bahrain. However, the College provided the Panel with new data that shows the percentage has improved recently.
- 4.11 The Panel met with a group of graduate and current students and was satisfied with the level of these graduates and students. Graduates were also satisfied with the knowledge they received during their studies in the college and the level of preparation for market needs. However, some of the interviewees asked for the

development and updating of courses in line with recent legal developments and labour market requirements.

4.12 Through its discussion with employers' representatives, from the private sector or from some government entities, such as the Office of the Public Attorney, the Review Panel reached the conclusion that the graduate standards are generally satisfying employers.

4.13 The College provided evidence to show that the KU Bachelor of Law graduates have performed competitively with other graduates from similar programmes in the Kingdom of Bahrain in job entry examination. In one case, out of 20 new employments in one of the major employers in Bahrain, 5 were KU graduates.

4.14 In coming to its conclusion regarding the academic standards of the graduates, the Review Panel noted, with appreciation, the following:

- Efforts are being made to benchmark the academic standards of the programme with other programmes nationally and regionally
- There an appropriate system in place for assessing students' results throughout many stages during the semester within a systematic approach based on justice and transparency
- There is an overall satisfaction with the graduates' standards by employers
- Efforts are being made to consolidate the College's relationships with its graduates and to follow them up in their work places
- There are distinguished programmes for visiting courts, legislative councils, and other institutions in the field of Law inside and outside the Kingdom of Bahrain.
- The use of external examiners to evaluate research projects.

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

- Develop clear academic standards for College of Law graduates to be adopted by the College and benchmark these with academic standards of other Colleges of Law in Arab and foreign countries;
- Establish an alumni chapter and ensure on-going communication with it;
- Improve assessment tools connected to the ILOs and ensure the objectivity and variety of assessment methods and tools.

4.16 **Judgment**

On balance, the Review Panel concludes that the programme satisfies the indicator on academic standards of the graduates.

5. Indicator 4: Effectiveness of quality management and assurance

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

- 5.1 The College has developed a Strategic Plan based on the College's mission and objectives. According to the SER, the College's vision 'stems from its pursuit to be one of the leading higher education institutions of Law in the Kingdom of Bahrain as well the Arab Gulf, and to produce highly qualified legal cadres who are capable of serving the community and conducting scientific research'. The College has developed a set of eleven objectives for the BL programme the most important of which are: preparing qualified cadres with scientific and applied competencies that are highly competitive; providing students with a set of knowledge and various skills; and ensure students are capable of using the tools of scientific research and handling legislative as well as applied legal problems. The College tries, through its Council and the Department Councils, to apply educational policies into practice. However, as this has been developed recently, it is premature to evaluate its effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that there are communicated policies with regard to examination systems, disciplinary regulations, admission and registration conditions, academic advising, and others.
- 5.2 The University has a Quality Assurance Committee and is in the process of developing a Quality Assurance Centre to signal the significance of promoting the culture of quality and ongoing development of its academic programmes. The Panel was pleased to note that there is an active Quality Assurance Committee in the College of Law, which is connected to the University Committee through its representative. Furthermore the College has organized a number of symposia and workshops to enhance a quality culture among its faculty members. However, the Review Panel did not find a comprehensive programme that is communicated and transparent for the purpose of ongoing development of faculty members. The current situation is restricted to symposia to enhance their capabilities in the fields of quality, academic advising, information technology, and English language. Nevertheless, there are positive efforts to enhance the quality of the programme and improve the current conditions. For instance, the SER was well-prepared, it reflects the actual performance of the College and demonstrates a realistic recognition of the quality enhancement requirements.
- 5.3 As stated in the SER the BL programme has gone through a number of reviews, both internally through the College Council and a committee formed for the purpose and externally through a group of external scholars from inside and outside the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Review Panel examined the documents related to these efforts. The Review Panel notes that the programme has been subject to more than

one amendment during the last few years and there is evidence that these amendments have been implemented through the last academic years.

- 5.4 The College collects its students' input by means of a questionnaire on a template that is circulated to students at the end of each semester to identify the course quality and the lecturer's level of performance and competency. Questionnaires are also circulated to graduates. However, the Review Panel did not find evidence that the results of these questionnaires are considered for performance improvement. The Review Panel noted that there is no ongoing policy of internal review for the purpose of improvement.
- 5.5 With regard to the identification of ongoing needs to develop the professional staff and the effectiveness of these activities, the College identified a number of actions that should be taken in this regard. However, it seems they have not yet been actioned. Also, there are no communicated plans to recruit teaching assistants from the College graduates or send them on scholarships to qualify them academically outside the Kingdom.
- 5.6 There are sufficient records on programme development and improvement. There is a file for each course which includes the course description, objectives, outcomes, teaching and learning methods, and syllabus distribution during the study weeks. The Panel examined these files and noted the progression and improvement through these course files. Also the College holds records for the minutes of its council's meetings, department councils' meetings, and various committees meetings, through which the Panel noted a contentious debate on quality assurance issues. In addition, there are other records for students' works and achievements, graduates' data, academic advising register, and files of students' activities and scientific visits. Furthermore, there is an electronic archive that includes most of the above-mentioned data and information.
- 5.7 In coming to its conclusions regarding the effectiveness of quality management and assurance, the Review Panel noted, with appreciation, the following:
- There is a Strategic Plan for the College
 - There is a functioning Quality Assurance Committee in the College of Law
 - The Programme is subject to external assessment
 - There are rules and procedures organizing examinations conduct and assessments and a student's grievance system for final examination results
 - Students' input and view are well-collected by means of questionnaires.

- 5.8 In terms of improvement, the Review Panel recommends that the College should:
- Accelerate the process of establishing and activating Quality Assurance Monitoring and Enhancement Centre at the University level and its branches at the Colleges level
 - Develop and implement action plans and mechanisms to implement the College's Strategic Plan
 - Adopt a systematic approach for periodical self-assessment of the programme while taking students, alumni, and employer's feedback into consideration
 - Implement an approved programme to develop faculty members' capacity, particularly with regard to information technology, foreign languages, and quality.

5.9 **Judgment**

On balance, the Review Panel concludes that the programme satisfies the indicator on effectiveness of quality management and assurance.

6. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews, and documentation made available during the site visit, the Review Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the *HERU/QAAET Programme Review Handbook, 2009*:

There is limited confidence in the Bachelor of Law programme offered by the Kingdom University.