



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

Higher Education Review Unit

Institutional Review Report

Kingdom University

Kingdom of Bahrain

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1. The Institutional Review Process

The review of Kingdom 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 the performance of education and training institutions in light of the guiding indicators developed by the Authority' (Royal Decree No. 32 of May 2008, amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009).

This report provides an account of the HERU institutional review process and the findings of the Expert Review Panel based on the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), appendices, and supporting materials submitted by Kingdom University, the supplementary documentation requested from the Institution, and interviews and observations made during the review site visit.

2. Overview of Kingdom University

Kingdom University (herein after referred to as 'KU' or the University) was founded in May 2001. It was licensed by the Higher Education Council on 13 May, 2001 and started offering its first academic programmes in September 2004. The campus is located in the city of Manama, and extends over an area of 2,200 square meters. It is equipped with facilities to accommodate around 1,200 students. The University employs a total of 98 staff members comprising 55 academic and 43 administrative members. There are 877 students enrolled in the first semester of the current academic year (2009-2010) distributed among the different university programmes. The University is organized into five Colleges in which there are 10 departments.

3. Mission, Planning and Governance

KU's Mission is to ensure that 'its educational and training programmes reach the utmost standards of professionalism through the excellence of its programmes' curricula, facilities and the qualified assistance of its professional faculty and staff members'. From this Mission the University has identified four main institutional goals. The Panel observed that the description of the Mission differs from that on the website; however both are primarily concerned with education and standards. The elements of the Vision are similar, and both emphasise higher education provision. The statement of Philosophy in the Self-Review is similar but not identical to that of the website.

More importantly, the Panel found that there is a lack of clarity between the Vision, Mission, Goals and Philosophy of the University. Furthermore, it could not determine the initial process for their establishment. No timeframes or process for their review is identified. The Panel urges the University to engage in a process to develop realistic Vision and Mission statements in the light of the institution's current situation with appropriate timeframes for review and which includes KU's stakeholders.

Recommendation-1

HERU recommends that Kingdom University undertake a thorough review and revision of its Vision and Mission through an institution-wide consultation process which has a view to articulating a realistic role compatible with the University's current capabilities, and to establish an appropriate timeframe for their review.

The SER refers to a Strategic Plan 2009-2015 which the institution was unable to provide at the time of submission of the SER as it was under development. The University subsequently produced a document which it claimed to be its Strategic Plan 2005-2010. This document is however clearly plagiarised from another university. Unsurprisingly, the academic community of KU in general is unaware of this document. The Panel finds this plagiarism to be unacceptable and inappropriate behaviour which does not conform to the standards of professional conduct and integrity expected in an institution of higher learning and constitutes a major loss of confidence in the integrity of the institution and thereby strongly damages its reputation.

Recommendation-2

HERU recommends that Kingdom University immediately cease to plagiarise documents and to develop transparent, ethical and inclusive processes for the establishment of its core documents, bringing in external sources as necessary but with appropriate attribution.

The SER does not refer to a process of Strategic Planning although it does refer to the setting of strategic goals. The Panel heard from a number of senior staff that they had contributed to strategic planning and the Panel was shown a SWOT analysis. Nevertheless, the Panel concluded that the University has not undertaken a Strategic Planning process; there are no Key Performance Indicators or annual targets. Although the University claimed to undertake an annual review of its performance it was unable to substantiate this claim with documentation. The Panel considered that the lack of planning, target setting and reporting is a major weakness and a significant risk to the sustainability of the institution.

Recommendation-3

HERU recommends that Kingdom University undertake a thorough, consultative and transparent process of Strategic Planning to develop a comprehensive institutional Strategic

Plan with appropriate Key Performance Indicators, and annual targets to enable the University to achieve the strategic objectives that will flow from the revised institutional Mission.

The SER does not address the University's financial and budgeting practices. The Panel was told during interviews with senior management that financial decisions are made by the President and the Director of Purchasing and Services, and that there are no budget forecasts or clear financial delegations. The Colleges, Departments and Administrative units do not have separate budgets but can request purchases to be made. The Panel heard that there is an intention for the Colleges and Administration to be separate cost centres from this year. The Panel found that there is little systematic financial planning and that financial decisions are *ad hoc* rather than guided by strategic considerations. This is a concern as the lack of linking budgeting, planning and resource allocation in a systematic manner is likely to have a negative impact on the quality of education provision at the institution.

Recommendation-4

HERU recommends that Kingdom University adopt a transparent and devolved budget that includes input from senior faculty members and which has clear budgetary allocations and financial delegations aligned to the new Strategic Plan.

The SER makes no mention of risk management, which is part of good governance. The Panel was advised that the institution does not have a risk management policy or a risk register but addresses risks as they arise. This is in itself a risk. The Panel noted that the Computer Centre was aware of some risks and had begun establishing processes to mitigate those risks, such as security of data.

Recommendation-5

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop a risk register and risk management strategy for consideration by the Board of Trustees and ensure these are reviewed on an annual basis.

The SER describes an organisational and management structure and provides two organisational charts. Management structures vest almost all authority with the President; reporting lines and delegations of authority are highly centralised and in some cases unclear, including the role of the Vice-President. Some senior staff members have no position descriptions. The Panel heard conflicting views of reporting lines and staff responsibilities and thereby accountability is lacking.

Recommendation-6

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop a revised organisational management structure with clear reporting lines and appropriate position descriptions for all staff with clear specification of roles and responsibilities.

The SER mentions that the Board of Directors is supportive of management and of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). However, the Panel heard during interviews that the Board of Directors is in fact fundamentally concerned with the financial viability of the company and is not concerned with the management of the institution. The SER makes no mention of the Board of Trustees. The Panel received evidence that the Board of Trustees had been established in 2008 and has defined responsibilities. The Panel was presented with a number of documents in this respect, which were neither consistent nor coherent. The Board of Trustees is required to meet at least twice per year but had met only once. The role of the Board of Trustees does not include an evaluation of the performance of the President. The paucity of meetings means in effect that governing power, which should be vested with the Board, is shifted to the President. This does not accord with good practice in higher education institutional governance. Individualised decision-making does not provide transparent and robust best practice in governance. The Panel urges the institution to ensure that the Board of Trustees take a more proactive role in the governance of the University.

Recommendation-7

HERU recommends that Kingdom University establish an effective and independent Board of Trustees, which meets regularly to carry out its governance responsibilities in accordance with good governance practice.

One of the designated roles of the Board of Trustees is the approval of policy or guidelines. The SER discusses the General Rules and Regulations of the University, the Student Handbook and the Academic Calendar. The University in its documents fails to understand the difference between policies and procedures. The Panel noted the absence of written policies covering many aspects of the University's activities. For example, there is no policy for the approval of new programmes, programme monitoring or programme review. There is no central register of policies or procedures, no clear mechanism for the approval of new or revised policy, no version control, and no review schedule. In key areas such as assessment and plagiarism, the Panel heard during interviews with a range of staff of varying practice across Departments and Colleges. This negatively impacts on the quality of teaching and learning. A comprehensive and well-promulgated set of policies is essential for the smooth running of the institution and fair treatment of both faculty and students. These policies need to be clearly understood by the university community. Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that the policies are implemented consistently across the institution.

Recommendation-8

HERU recommends that Kingdom University urgently develop a comprehensive suite of policies with a central register, version control and a clear review schedule. These policies should be freely available to staff and students in hard copy and/or on the institutional

website. Monitoring mechanisms need to be established to ensure that the policies are implemented consistently across the institution.

As part of its extra evidence, the University provided an Academic Plan 2005-2010. This document is again plagiarised and the Panel reiterates the requirement for ethical conduct as outlined in Recommendation-2. The Panel noted the beginnings of operational planning at College level and for some administrative units (e.g. the Computing Centre). Such planning does, however, need to be linked to the KU's overall Strategic Plan rather than developing plans for units in isolation from the strategic goals.

Recommendation-9

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop supporting operational plans which flow from the University's Mission and Strategic Plan, and which contain appropriate Key Performance Indicators, and annual targets to enable measurement of performance.

The University attached as part of the plagiarised Academic Plan, a further plagiarised policy on Academic Integrity. There are already in existence guidelines and penalties for plagiarism in the Student Handbook, although there is no definition of plagiarism and no clarity about the application of the sliding scale of penalties. The Panel reiterates the requirement for ethical conduct by KU as in Recommendation-2. The Panel is concerned that the University does not distinguish clearly between policy and procedure. The Panel heard that there is a newly established Discipline Committee (October 2009), as well as a process for the appeal of grades and a process for the investigation of grievances. The Panel noted the number of disparate documents and procedures in relation to complaints, grievances and plagiarism and suggests that these be integrated into a single policy and procedures.

Recommendation-10

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop an integrated policy and procedures for academic misconduct, which include clear criteria for the application of penalties and clear processes for appeals.

4. Academic Standards

KU offers Bachelor degree qualifications in Finance, Business, Law, Mass Communications and Public Relations, Computing and Information Technologies, and Architecture and Interior Design, all of which are recognised fields of higher education study. The programme structures and credit hours (between 129-179 hours) are in accordance with international norms for the amount of study required for the award of these qualifications.

In relation to curriculum design and credit, the SER made reference to the University's use of 'international norms similar to those adopted by well-known universities'. During the site visit, the Panel learned in interviews with senior management that the choice of international benchmarks in programme design was subject-specific, with the University seeking to benchmark itself against other universities. In the SER, KU states that the development of programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) is benchmarked against national and international norms for similar programmes using 'informal processes' through faculty members drawing on their experience of higher education outside of Bahrain. The Panel found this method to be informal, insufficient, and lacking in appropriate externality to ensure the quality of the programmes.

Recommendation- 11

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop appropriate formal processes for the use of external reference points in the development of its academic programmes.

The SER states that the ILOs for courses in each programme are clearly described in the course file, which is maintained by the department, and is considered to be the key repository for information on individual courses. This was confirmed during interviews with Deans and faculty members. The Panel learned during interviews with faculty members that the use of ILOs has been introduced in the recent past (in the last 1-2 years) as courses and programmes have been reviewed and 'refreshed'. Course information sets out ILOs in terms of: knowledge and understanding, intellectual skills, professional and practical skills, and general and transferable skills.

The Panel had the opportunity to study a sample of course files during the review. While the files for all these courses contained stated ILOs, in some courses, a number of these were not clearly articulated. Additionally, very few of the courses' ILOs were mapped to the course curriculum delivery, and to the course assignments. The Panel is of the view that faculty members have an incomplete understanding of the purpose of ILOs, and the relationship of ILOs to course delivery and assessment.

Recommendation- 12

HERU recommends that Kingdom University support faculty members through staff development activities in their understanding of Intended Learning Outcomes and how to develop them in programme design and delivery.

The University states that 'clear and restrictive requirements' are set as admission criteria elements for all KU programmes offered by the University. Applicants must achieve a minimum grade of 60% in the high-school certificate, or equivalent. The University also has arrangements for students transferring from other institutions. Students are required to have

a grade C pass or more, and to have achieved the required level of credit for the programme into which they are transferring.

Most courses have curricula delivered and assessed in English; the exceptions being the Law and the Arts programmes. Courses in the Colleges of Business Sciences and Finances, Computing and Information Technology, and College of Engineering are taught and assessed in the English language. Prior to entry there is a 'placement test of English that is given to all students'. The English Competency Placement Test (ECPT) is of two hours duration and involves multiple choice questions. During interviews with staff, the Panel learned that the original design of the English test is long-standing and that a faculty member is seeking guidance from the British Council on revising the design of the English language test.

Affirmation-1

HERU affirms Kingdom University for its plans to redesign the English Language test and encourages the institution to finalise the test as soon as possible.

Students who do not pass the placement tests are required to undertake an orientation semester consisting of nine credit hours per week for English language. The general view of a range of faculty members is that the 9 credit hours per week for the English 'orientation semester' are not enough and that students need more support with their language development. The SER did not provide any data on ECPT completion and/or the numbers of students undertaking the 'orientation' seminar (those who do not meet the English standards pre-requisite).

Recommendation-13

HERU recommends that Kingdom University review the curriculum design and duration of its English language orientation semester, in line with higher education sector good practice, in order to prepare properly and support students for their programme of studies.

With regard to assessment, the SER did not contain information on an institution-wide assessment policy, nor evidence of scholarly reflection on assessment processes. The Panel learned during interviews with the Quality Assurance Committee that there is not a formal University Assessment Policy; neither is there an institution-wide approach, overview or set of common principles or guidelines to inform assessment processes and practices. The Panel also did not find from interviews with faculty members that there is an understanding of how the different forms of assessment should be aligned with course objectives and learning outcomes.

The Panel heard from interviews with a range of staff that there is variation between colleges in the examination setting process. For example, in the College of Arts, a departmental committee looks at draft examination papers. In the College of Engineering,

there are more informal discussions. In the College of Business Sciences and Finance, there is no apparent oversight beyond the course tutor. The Panel encourages the institution to develop and implement an examination policy with appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The SER does not discuss the moderation of students' results. The Panel learned during interviews with Deans that internal moderation of students' work at departmental level involves only 'extremes' in performance (top and bottom marks). An example of internal moderation of students' work in the Law Department was given. The Panel did not find evidence of University-wide requirements, or clear guidelines, for the internal moderation of students' work. This issue needs to be addressed.

External reviewers are used for moderating draft examination questions. The Panel found in documentation evidence of the appointment of external examiners for final examinations. The Panel learned from interviews with management and staff that a sample of student examination papers is sent to external experts at another university for scrutiny. In some programmes (e.g. Architecture), the department uses external 'jurors' in the assessment of students' work (e.g. presentations on projects). Students reported positively about this, in relation to feedback on their performance; however, such good practice does not appear to be shared between departments.

Recommendation-14

HERU recommends that Kingdom University take steps to develop and implement a University-wide Assessment Policy. In particular, the University should develop and implement policies and guidelines including the setting of coursework assignments and examinations, and for the moderation of students' performance. These policies and guidelines should be informed by reference to existing external good practice in the area of assessment.

KU has a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a number of other institutions. From studying these, it was apparent to the Panel that the agreements with universities do not relate to the collaborative provision of programmes of study, but rather more generalized agreements of co-operation and mutual development. The exception to this is a planned programme to be validated by the University of Sunderland. At the time of the site visit, approval for this had not yet been granted by the HEC, although the Panel heard from academic staff that early marketing and tentative recruitment to the programme had already taken place. As approval cannot be taken for granted, the Panel suggests that the institution refrain from marketing and recruiting students for this programme until approval has been given.

5. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The University formed its first Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in 2007; however, this did not yield any tangible outcome. The current committee is the third iteration. It was established in mid October 2009 and is chaired by the President. It has sub-committees in each College. During interviews, the Panel learned that the QAC was established as a reactive measure to the regulatory requirements of HEC and QAAET, and that it is a monitoring, and not a decision-making body. The committee coordinates the quality-related activities in the different colleges and administrative departments in the institution. Evidence provided by the Institution revealed that the QACs are comprised of only academic faculty members, with no representation from administrative departments or students. The Panel also noted with concern that these committees do not have specific terms of reference, communication and reporting mechanisms, or accountability and decision-making responsibilities.

Recommendation-15

HERU recommends that Kingdom University formulate terms of reference for the Quality Assurance Committee, including its membership to ensure that all stakeholders are adequately represented so that the Committee can function effectively within a transparent quality assurance framework.

In the SER, reference was made to KU quality policies and 'an effective administration for implementing quality management policies and strategies'; however, no evidence was presented to the Panel with regards to quality strategies, internal Quality Assurance (QA) systems or a quality assurance manual. The document provided by KU as its QA Handbook is in essence an Academic Regulation Handbook with information pertaining to evaluation policies and the conduct of examinations. Furthermore, no processes were identified to monitor compliance with the HEC licensing regulations on a regular basis, or to identify and implement quality improvements across the institution. The Panel reviewed the QA documents provided by the institution and found that the Colleges' QA reports lacked evidence of self-critique and did not clearly indicate how this information would be used for the effective monitoring of quality improvements. The Panel encourages the institution to develop and implement a system of quality assurance, which includes monitoring and evaluating as well as mechanisms for quality improvement built into the system.

Recommendation-16

HERU recommends that Kingdom University establish an overarching quality framework of appropriate policies and procedures and ensure their implementation and monitoring across all Colleges.

Since its establishment, the QAC has taken some initiatives towards developing particular aspects of quality. These include the preparation of course files (curriculum documents with ILOs), the introduction of some curriculum changes, and the implementation of an external examiners system. Progress was also made in internal quality assurance measurements, such as student evaluations of courses and some administrative facilities, as well as exit surveys. The QAC was also specifically involved in the preparation of the SER and has organized several lectures and workshops to familiarize the staff with HERU's quality review process and requirements. While the Panel confirms the importance of such initiatives, it is of the view that KU needs to integrate these initiatives into its embryonic internal quality assurance system and to develop a QA manual that documents its quality improvement procedures, and which is clearly understood and owned by all stakeholders.

The Panel probed the Senior Management and faculty members for their perception of what constitutes quality; their answers revealed a lack of common understanding of quality and of the role of quality assurance in relation to accountability and improvement, as well as of the concept of an integrated internal quality assurance framework. The Panel is of the view that awareness campaigns, workshops, seminars and dissemination of quality related information should be regularly sought by the QAC to align all concerned stakeholders to the targeted quality provisions. Moreover, Senior Management needs to take the quality management of the institution more seriously and to revisit the ambitious vision and core values governing the work of the QAC and, align it with the overall Vision of KU.

6. Quality of Teaching and Learning

While the SER says relatively little about pedagogy, the Panel heard of a variety of teaching methods, including group work and practical training. There are some guidelines available for practical training. The Panel heard during interviews with students and employers that this experience in the workplace is valued. The Panel also learned about a compulsory multi-disciplinary course on creative thinking. Practical and studio-based classes were well-received by students despite the over-crowded physical environment. The University does not have a Learning Management System and so there is as yet no capacity for the effective use of the online environment.

The SER identifies the extensive qualifications of its staff, which are appropriate for the programmes they teach, as a strength. More than 80% of lecturers are Ph.D-qualified. The Panel heard from students and alumni that the academic staff members are accessible, helpful and committed.

Commendation-1

HERU commends Kingdom University for the accessibility of their academic staff and their commitment to the educational development of their students.

The institution gives considerable attention to student evaluations, which are implemented at the end of each semester and just before graduation. The University has focussed on these student evaluations of courses and teaching as a primary means of quality assurance. The Panel heard from staff that evaluations are used to assess academic staff performance. The Panel is of the view that the implementation of regular and systematic course evaluations is a useful step in the development of assuring the quality of its courses but is of the view that the institution is over-reliant on these surveys. Other activities such as employer feedback need to be taken into consideration. Nevertheless the Panel encourages KU to ensure that the surveys are analysed further to identify systemic issues, which should be reported upon. Such reports should then be discussed by appropriate committees at the programme (Department) and College level. Furthermore, the Panel encourages KU to use its surveys to identify areas of weakness and develop and implement improvements to address these.

The Panel heard during interviews with faculty members about ACCA, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants Accreditation, which gives recognition of the KU Finance and Accountancy programme and some credit for professional examinations in Accountancy. ACCA is a professional accountancy body that provides a professional qualification for non-degree qualified accountants. The KU degree is recognised as providing some credit towards these professional examinations. The Panel encourages the institution to continue with this activity and similar professional accreditation as this should have a positive effect on the teaching and learning in this programme.

KU describes the programme design process as taking place through 'multi-steps at the University level' and reference is made to the involvement of 'various stakeholders'. The SER also makes reference to supporting programme approval documentation – but no formal programme approval process documentation was provided. The Panel learned during interviews with faculty members that new programmes are approved by the relevant College Council, and then final approval is given by the University Council, which is the highest level internal body for approving course proposals. In the absence of any coherent and documented evidence, the Panel concluded that there is no clear policy and procedures for the approval of new courses and programmes. It is also unclear how the University assures itself that the approval processes that it does have are effective.

Recommendation-17

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement a policy and procedure for the design and approval of new programmes.

The Panel saw from documentation and heard in interviews with staff that a certain amount of curriculum review had been undertaken after the establishment of the QAC and in response to some external feedback, and saw some evidence of this occurring. There is, however, no policy and procedure for annual course monitoring. While student course evaluations are undertaken on a regular basis (and could usefully contribute to annual course monitoring), there is no systematic mechanism by which the outcomes of these surveys are fed into wider annual reflections on the operation of the courses, including reflections by faculty staff, and the use of student data as key performance indicators.

There is currently no policy and procedure for the periodic review (including the potential for re-approval) of programmes. During interviews with the Quality Assurance Committee, the Panel received confirmation that the University had not considered the use of periodic review as a means of continuing to reflect on and assure the maintenance of academic standards.

Recommendation- 18

HERU recommends that Kingdom University, in order to secure and maintain the academic standards of its awards, take steps to develop and implement appropriate policies, methodologies and procedures for the monitoring and review of programmes and courses.

In relation to unfair academic practices, the University provided as supporting evidence a Plagiarism Policy, which set out what is meant by academic integrity, academic dishonesty, plagiarism and cheating. However, this Policy was found by the Panel to have been plagiarised from another University. It is apparent to the Panel that there is no official University-wide policy on unfair academic practices by students; responses from faculty staff suggested that policies and practices (e.g. penalties) vary between Colleges. Similarly, it is not clear to the Panel that there are institutional published guidelines for students on good academic practice and penalties for unfair practice.

With regard to the production of academic reports, the Panel heard that KU has a new Management Information System but it has not yet been used to generate reports. The Panel considers that the provision of quantitative data on, e.g. grade distributions and retention rates would be of considerable benefit in assessing programme performance and in identifying students at-risk of failure so that timeous interventions can be made.

Affirmation-2

HERU affirms Kingdom University for its plans to implement the Management Information System to provide academic reports.

7. Student Support

The SER provided very little information on student administration and support services. No information is given on the academic record system or student satisfaction with administration. Furthermore, the Panel was not provided with information that a more formalised administration and academic records system is in place.

The Panel learned that an updated MIS system (ATS- Admission and Registration subsystem and EduGate) was introduced during 2009-10, which would improve student registration and enable the production of reports for a range of audiences and needs. During interviews with the Panel, students expressed their satisfaction with the introduction of an online registration system, which has greatly enhanced the registration process.

There is a range of activities available to students, such as learning laboratories, tuition, and access to staff. These include: self-access learning laboratories for mathematics skills and English language; small group tutoring; and 2 hours/per week contact with tutors. The Panel also learned in interviews with staff and students that each student has an Academic Advisor. However, the Panel was not able to establish the nature of the role of the Academic Advisor. The Panel encourages the institution to clarify this and ensure that both staff and students are aware of the roles and responsibilities of each party.

The institution provides support for students with academic difficulties in the form of free tutorial teaching groups, as well as allocating faculty office hours devoted to helping these students. However, KU has not yet implemented formal mechanisms for the identification of students whose performance is below satisfactory level and who may be at risk of failure. It is left to the students to identify their own weaknesses and arrange with their lecturers to overcome this. The Panel urges KU to address this vital issue by developing and implementing support mechanisms to assist students at risk of failure.

Recommendation-19

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement policies and mechanisms to identify and support at-risk students and ensure that these are implemented consistently across all Colleges.

The University provides all students with a Student Handbook that includes information on regulations, assessment guidelines, and curriculum design. The Student Handbook is also accessible on-line. The Panel was informed that relevant administrative information (e.g. examination schedules, changes in lecture timings) is communicated to students *via* Short Message Service. The Panel heard in interviews with both staff and students of concern that it is not a reliable communication tool. The University is encouraged to explore other

methods of conveying information; the institution's future plan of establishing an exchange mail service, as part of its ICT Plan, is a step in the right direction.

During the site visit, the Panel found that student support facilities are rudimentary, largely informal and unstructured. While a new health clinic is anticipated for the planned new campus, current health provision covers only matters, such as basic security, first aid and testing for swine flu. The Careers Advice Service for students is also not well-established. The Panel learned that the Head of Students Activities was providing basic counselling advice to students, on an informal basis, although he has received no training and support in this area. There is currently no female staff member available to provide counselling advice to female students. The University is strongly encouraged to develop provision for student counselling, health care and career planning.

Recommendation-20

HERU recommends that Kingdom University provide adequate provision for counselling, health care and careers planning for students.

The Head of Students Activities is responsible for activities such as providing support for the work of the Students Council. These include organising elections to the Students Council, and helping plan their activities. The Head of Student Activities also handles financial requests from the Students Council, not all of which are successful. The University states that the main activity of the Students' Council is in the areas of social, cultural and recreational activities for students. The students interviewed by the Panel expressed satisfaction with the activities of the Student Council and the provision of various social events. During interviews with students, the Panel found that the student community was generally supportive of the work of the Council.

The Council acts as a strong link between students and senior management. During interviews, however, the Panel was informed that there is no student representation on key committees within the University. This is viewed by the Panel as a serious drawback as it hinders the consideration of students' needs and views in the formal decision-making process.

Recommendation-21

HERU recommends that Kingdom University takes measures towards involving students in the institution's decision-making processes via their participation in appropriate committees.

8. Human Resources

The Panel heard consistently about the difficulties in recruiting and retaining academic staff. KU has good staff data covering academic and full-time staff, including information about level of qualifications, and a core academic and administrative staff. It has records of staff turnover, staff-student ratios and of staff qualifications. Over 80% of the current faculty members hold doctoral degrees, which is positive. The overall average of the student to staff ratio is 22:1 which is in compliance with the HEC's regulations. The Panel found no evidence, however, that this information is available to senior management for planning purposes to address the recurring issues of recruitment and retention.

Part-time staff, which constitute 41% of the total number of academic staff, are hired on a semester-contract basis. In interviews with part-time lecturers, it was apparent that they are satisfied with their working conditions and the institution's commitment to them. Although they did not have their own offices, they emphasized that they have adequate access to institutional resources that enables them to carry out their academic work. The Panel also heard that the respective Head of Departments and colleagues provide them with the required information to keep them up-to-date.

The SER makes reference to a Human Resources (HR) policy and a workforce management plan. Some HR related information is provided in the Internal Regulations, primarily pertaining to the terms and condition of employment. An HR policy is provided but it relates to processes and does not address the topics that are typically covered in it, such as selection criteria for various categories of staff, and promotion criteria. Furthermore, the information provided does not appear to apply to part-time staff.

Recommendation- 22

HERU recommends that Kingdom University urgently develop a human resources policy as part of an overarching human resources plan for all employees to support the recruitment and retention of appropriate and qualified staff.

The Panel was informed in interviews with staff that faculty recruitment is initiated *via* advertisements in regional papers. The candidates' CVs are forwarded by the HR department to the respective Colleges for interviews after which the selected candidates are finally approved by the President. Faculty members' CVs were provided in the SER's supporting documents and they showed that overall, staff are appropriately qualified in their respective disciplines. Interviews with faculty members revealed that they are hired on 1-2 years renewable contracts. The Panel is concerned that such contracts may hinder the stability and sustainability of the core academic staff. KU is urged to re-evaluate its policy of offering short-term contracts to allow for long-term contribution from Faculty, in line with the Institution's Values of 'Satisfying its employees so that they are proud to be members of the University'.

Recommendation-23

HERU recommends that Kingdom University re-evaluate its recruitment policy to allow for longer-term contracts, hence assuring the sustainability of its core academic staff.

The Internal Regulations article 15, clauses 2 and 3, prescribe that the performance appraisal of staff members is undertaken annually by the direct supervisor. A copy of the evaluation form is included. The form is quantitative and focuses on research activities of academic staff, and participation in university and community service activities rather than on all their responsibilities, in particular teaching and learning, which is a core function. The Panel learned that most academic staff had not participated in performance evaluation. Furthermore, there is no indication that the performance appraisal system includes other sources of information related to staff performance, such as student feedback and teaching performance.

Recommendation-24

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement an annual comprehensive performance appraisal system for all staff.

The Panel is also concerned about the lack of a formal induction process for new staff. KU indicated that the HR department follows up on new employees' legal issues and provides them with job descriptions and a copy of internal regulations. There is no evidence that new staff are provided with information about job requirements, local workplace issues, working conditions. The need for such a formal system will become more evident as the institution grows and the number of new staff increases.

Recommendation-25

HERU recommends that Kingdom University formalize and expand the orientation process of new faculty members and that it involves both Human Resources and the respective departments.

The Panel found that a particular gap in the University's approach to human resources is the lack of targeted staff development to enhance capability and productivity. The institution states that 'KU has a systematic approach to staff development and provides opportunities for all staff to remain up-to-date'. The Panel heard that the Training and Development Department, established a year ago, has initiated a process for the development of administrative staff members whereby they can attend specific training programmes based on the recommendation of the Heads of Department.

KU presented evidence of 15 administrative staff members attending Excel and Photoshop training workshops. The University was not able to provide the Panel with information about the evaluation of these training workshops or the implementation of the outcomes of such evaluations. The Panel was also informed that Training and Development Department is in the process of developing a survey to identify academic staff development needs but this is yet to be implemented. During interviews with academics, the Panel heard that the University encourages research staff to attend conferences abroad, particularly if they present papers on issues of direct relevance to the Bahraini community; however, only a very limited number of staff had benefitted from this opportunity. Moreover, no specific budget has been allocated to staff development activities. Staff development should be linked to staff needs as identified in the performance appraisals as well as the strategic objectives of the University.

Recommendation-26

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement a systematic approach to staff development that is underpinned by a separate staff development budget.

While the normal load of academic staff is 5 courses per semester for a Ph.D holder and 6 subjects for Master holders, the majority of academic staff to whom the Panel spoke taught 5 + 2 courses per semester. The University is thus using the HEC's regulations for maximum workload for academic staff as a norm, which is an inappropriate interpretation of the requirements.

There are no rules for teaching load reduction for staff members, who also hold managerial positions. Given the high teaching load, including time provided by staff, such as student support, administrative and managerial duties, full-time academic staff have limited time for carrying out their own research, keeping up-to-date in their discipline area or engaging in any development programmes. The Panel is deeply concerned that the current situation negatively impacts on the quality of teaching and the consequent fulfilment of KU's institutional goals and thus constitutes an academic risk to the institution.

Recommendation-27

HERU recommends that Kingdom University review the workload allocation policy so that it effectively supports the strategic goals of the University and supports staff in performing their responsibilities.

9. Infrastructure, Physical and other Resources

A particularly pressing issue for KU is that of its campus and physical facilities. KU is currently renting two floors of a commercial building. The space is limited and there are serious issues of over-crowding in particular in the afternoons and evenings, which limits the university's ability to grow in terms of new courses and enrolments. KU has some facilities for people with special needs which are again limited due to the premises. The Panel is of the view that the current facility can pose serious risks to the health and safety of staff and students, and that the University should take immediate measures to reduce these risks.

The University has a long-standing intention and has developed supporting plans to build a new campus at Hamad Town. These plans, however, have encountered a number of legal and financial difficulties that are not yet resolved. There appears to be no short-term solution to the limitations in the physical infrastructure.

Recommendation-28

HERU recommends that Kingdom University limit its student enrolment to those that can realistically be accommodated in the current site of delivery and find an interim solution to the provision of adequate premises while awaiting the construction of the new campus.

The University keeps a register of its equipment. Evidence is provided that KU complies with the minimum requirements in terms of health and safety in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The University has, however, not developed its own internal policies and processes for health and safety. The Panel strongly urges the institution to do so.

Recommendation-29

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement policies to ensure the health and safety of its staff and students.

KU has a small library due to the physical limitation of its campus; the designated reading area can accommodate a maximum of 23 students and seven computer terminals for student access. For the same reason, the library has a small number of books; however, the University to some extent compensates for the limited size in the provision of substantial electronic data. The Library subscribes to Proquest, Futures from Mansoorah University in Egypt and the Encyclopaedia of Law which provide access to more than 4000 journals. The Panel was informed during interviews with staff that students who use the library receive an induction on the use of these electronic resources at the start of each semester.

The Library has recently taken a number of initiatives to strengthen the quality of its services. It has prepared plans for the period 2010-2016; it has conducted a benchmarking

survey with a number of US universities. It is not clear to the Panel why these universities were selected for benchmarking and there are no references to targets that KU aims to achieve. The Panel encourages the University to make use of such benchmarks to improve the quality of library provision.

In early 2010, KU administered a survey to library users rather than the total student body. The response rate was only 5%, which questions the validity of the survey. Moreover, the methodology applied in the survey has a number of shortcomings and needs to be reviewed so that it can provide reliable information. Nevertheless, the initiatives are important first steps in quality assurance of the library. KU needs to intensify its efforts in achieving adequate standards of good practice for its library; of particular importance is the development of the library strategic plan with clearly defined targets and performance indicators and an allocated budget.

During the site visit, the librarians explained that new books and reference acquisition is made according to student and faculty members' suggestions and is based on course files requirements. A list of required books is compiled by the librarians and is forwarded to the Deans for approval. KU is urged by the Panel to adopt a more formal acquisition process and to allocate a dedicated library acquisition budget.

Recommendation-30

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement a library strategic and operational plan with targets, and identify Key Performance Indicators and budgetary requirements.

There are two computer laboratories available to students when they are not used for teaching, which is mostly in the late afternoons and evenings. Given that the majority of students work, these are the times when students need to make use of the computer laboratories. There is free Wi-Fi available to students which the Panel learned that most students use. Email is often used to communicate with students but the University does not yet provide email accounts for students.

From the tour of the facilities, it was evident to the Panel that the physical resources are limited and do not adequately support the delivery of the academic programmes. There are limited laboratories for engineering and architecture students and smaller break-out rooms for students' project/group work. Projectors and laptops are made available to staff upon request and full-time staff have personalised KU email addresses. The latter does not apply to part-time staff. Furthermore, there are no office spaces made available to part-time staff when they are at the University. KU's approach to the provision of teaching resources is to wait for the construction of the new campus rather than attempting to address the needs in the short term.

Recommendation-31

HERU recommends that Kingdom University take a proactive approach to ensuring sustained access to appropriate and sufficient physical resources for teaching and learning.

The SER does not include information on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources. There is some information provided on ICT management roles and responsibilities. There is no ICT disaster recovery plan or maintenance plans. There is some benchmarking of ICT services but not of staff. The Panel heard that the Computer Center has conducted some focused survey for specialised services. When requested, a draft IT Strategy 2007-2010 was provided. The Panel learned during interviews with senior staff that the draft strategy had not been implemented but a working plan for projects to be implemented in the period 2009-2010 is setting the priorities for the Computer Centre. Under this plan the University has undertaken a number of positive initiatives in the acquisition and upgrading of IT systems. The Panel in particular noted the new version of the Management Information System introduced in January 2010 containing several capabilities, and that it has plans for further system introductions, such as an electronic learning management system and a workflow management system.

Recommendation-32

HERU recommends that Kingdom University ensure that the current computing/IT initiatives be developed into the University's overarching Strategic Plan to support effectively the University's goals and objectives

10. Research

KU indicates a commitment to research in its mission 'Excellence in scientific research for sustainable social development', and in its institutional goals 'To be a research institution which will contribute to the development of its community, its region and universal science'. However, the SER provided no information regarding KU's research strategy or policies on the conduct of research. This was confirmed during interviews with academics who stated that they are not aware of any research management plans or policies relating to the conduct of research projects. Moreover, in its SWOT analysis KU identified a 'lack of serious research activities engagement' as one of its major weaknesses, yet the SER has not specified any concrete measures that will be undertaken by KU to overcome this weakness. Further, the Panel did not hear of any such plans during interviews with senior staff.

Recommendation-33

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement a sustainable strategic plan with KPIs and targets to support research and monitor its output, together with introducing policies and processes to ensure ethical and effective conduct of research that strictly prohibits plagiarism and academic fraud.

During interviews with academics, it became evident to the Panel that research at KU is essentially an individual activity initiated by faculty members who conduct research either individually or in collaboration with overseas colleagues. The Panel was pleased to note that KU encourages and supports practical research targeted towards issues of direct relevance to the community. The Panel supports this emphasis and encourages KU to capitalize on these initiatives as a means of obtaining external research grants and industry funding.

Information provided by KU regarding its faculty members research activities indicate a limited output, which consists mainly of conference publications during the years 2005-2008. A list of academic faculty's publications was provided for two Colleges only; the College of Business Sciences and Finance which has 15 publications for the period 2006-2009, and the College of Computing and IT which has 13 publications for the period 2004-2007. Upon careful examination of these publications, the Panel detected some cases of academic fraud and improprieties (improper inclusion of authors) in the College of Business Sciences and Finance's publications. This practice is seen by the Panel as a serious threat to the intellectual and academic integrity of the University, which can impact on its reputation as well as the reputation of its scholars. The Panel urges the institution to take steps to ensure that this practice ceases. Failure to do so constitutes a major academic and reputational risk to the institution.

During interviews with senior management and academics, the Panel was informed repeatedly of the University's financial support of its faculty members in attending regional and international conferences, provided they participate with a research paper. While the Panel acknowledges the importance of conference participation by faculty, KU is urged to consider conference attendance as part of an overarching Research Plan whereby these conferences enrich identified research areas/niches.

Affirmation-3

HERU affirms Kingdom University for its support for research staff members to participate in conferences.

The SER states that KU has allocated 3% of its 2009-2010 academic year budget for research and development activities as part of its compliance with the HEC's licensing regulations. During interviews, the Panel learned that no significant expenditure was made from this allocated budget, apart from negligible amounts to cover the cost of attending conferences by a few faculty members, honoraria for external examiners as well as the cost of printing books. The University is strongly urged to utilize the research and development budget as a catalyst for furthering its research initiatives and achieving its institutional goals in relation to the research function. Of particular importance, is providing faculty members with the required support and resources in terms of adequately equipped laboratories and qualified research assistants.

Recommendation-34

HERU recommends that Kingdom University allocate adequate annual funds to support the development of research infrastructure and an effective research management system to provide an environment conducive to initiating research activities.

As noted earlier in the Report, the Panel is of the view that KU needs to re-consider the teaching and administrative loads of academic staff, to allow them more time to carry out their research projects. Moreover, faculty member's research activities need to be incorporated within the annual performance appraisal process and promotion criteria.

The University offers four Masters level programmes: the Master in Business Administration (MBA), M.Sc. in Information Technology, M.Sc. in Architecture and Master in Law. With the exception of the MBA, the Masters' curricula include a research thesis equivalent to 9 credit hours (M.Sc. in Architecture and Master in Law) or 12 credit hours (M.Sc. in Information Technology); none of these Masters degrees can be considered as research degrees. There are no doctoral programmes offered at KU.

The SER states that the University offers some support and follow-up of progress for graduate students, as well as guidelines for graduate research supervision. The Panel heard during interviews with graduate students of their satisfaction with the support they receive from the institution; they particularly appreciated the friendly environment and the accessibility of their supervisors.

The students, however, indicated that they are not allocated their own work stations or desks, and that they meet with their supervisors in the cafeteria, library or faculty's offices. The Panel is of the view that KU needs to improve on the physical resources available to graduate students, in terms of laboratories, study areas and multi-purpose rooms. The Panel also encourages KU to offer its students capacity-building courses and workshops, such as research methods, technical writing, and ethical conduct of research, which prepares them for graduate research.

Recommendation- 35

HERU recommends that Kingdom University provide effective support to its postgraduate students to ensure the quality of programme outcomes in terms of systematic research training, adequate supervision and access to required resources.

11. Community Engagement

KU's commitment to community engagement is indicated in both its mission 'to enhance long term economic development and human productivity in the Kingdom of Bahrain' and vision 'to take part in the development of the Kingdom of Bahrain in particular and the development of the Gulf Region in general' statements. The SER also provides examples of the University's

engagement with its local and regional communities; these include practical training programmes, research projects and workshops organized in cooperation with educational institutions, social societies and governmental bodies. However, during the site visit, the Panel did not find evidence of a deep understanding of the definition of community engagement, and it became apparent from interviews with various stakeholders that community events are the product of individual staff and student initiatives rather than a systematic approach to community engagement. Moreover, the Panel learned that the University does not have a formal policy on community service and that it does not keep a comprehensive record of its contribution to the community.

While the Panel appreciates the community activities indicated in documentation and confirmed in interviews with staff and students, it is of the view that these initiatives need to be formalized and integrated within the institution's strategic plan. Of particular importance is the development of a community engagement policy and framework that enables the coordination of community events, the monitoring of their quality and the reporting of their outcomes.

Recommendation-36

HERU recommends that Kingdom University develop and implement a community engagement policy that aligns individual efforts with its strategic plan and enables the coordination, monitoring and review of its community engagement activities.

During interview sessions, the Panel was provided with several examples of ways in which academics and researchers interact with local and regional industries. These include submitting proposals and offering technical advice on economic and environmental problems that are of direct relevance to the region. For the most part, these activities are also the product of individual faculty initiatives and are not linked to a University-wide approach. Nevertheless, the Panel urges the University to build on these positive initiatives and strengthen its relationship with industry by harnessing and making full use of its resources. The setting up of Advisory Boards in Colleges, comprised of industry and employers representatives, can be a positive step towards establishing collaboration channels with relevant local industry as well as ensuring that the programme are aligned with labour market needs.

The Panel noted with concern that while the SER emphasizes that community engagement is taken into account in the evaluation and promotion of faculty members, no evidence of this being effectively implemented was presented during the site visit. This needs to be addressed.

12. Conclusion

Despite being established since 2001 and having a fairly lengthy lead-in time before offering programmes – 3 years, KU has significant shortcomings in the areas of governance, management, planning, and the three core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement. It is at a very early stage in the development and implementation of its quality assurance arrangements. While it has an enthusiastic and committed staff, academics suffer from high teaching loads and insufficient accommodation. KU lacks policies, plans, targets and reporting mechanisms in many areas of activity. These factors, taken together with the damaging lack of integrity shown by the evident plagiarism, have a negative impact on the quality and reputation of the University. These shortcomings require the immediate and focussed attention of the institution’s senior management to enable KU to maintain integrity. Failure to do so constitutes a major reputational and academic risk to the institution, its alumni and students.