هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN مـــــلــكــة الـــبـــحـــريـــن

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
Programme Review Report

Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance (BIBF) - University of London
Bachelor of Science in Economics and Management
Kingdom of Bahrain

Site Visit Date: 20-22 November 2023
Extension Visit Dates: 19-20 January 2025

HF001-C3-F001

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Acronyms

AMR	Annual Monitoring Report
APR	Academic Programme Review
BIBF	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BScE&M	Bachelor of Science Economics and Management
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CODE	Centre for Online and Distance Education
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
EMFSS	Economics, Management, Finance and Social Sciences
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (UK)
HEC	Higher Education Council
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resources
IPB	International Programmes Board (UoL)
IT	Information Technology
IWG	Institutions Working Group (LSE)
LSE	London School of Economics
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OfS	Office for Students (UK)
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK)
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTC	Recognised Teaching Centre
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SIS	Student Information System

SVG	Student Voice Group
TCAM	Teaching Centres Annual Monitoring
TCRF	Teaching Centres Recognition Framework
UoL	University of London
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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I. Introduction

In keeping with its mandate, the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA), through the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR), carries out two types of reviews that are complementary. These are: Institutional Reviews, where the whole institution is assessed; and the Academic Programme Reviews (APRs), where the quality of teaching, learning and academic standards are assessed in academic programmes within various colleges according to specific standards and indicators as reflected in its Framework.

Following the revision of the APR Framework at the end of Cycle 1 in accordance with the BQA procedure, the revised APR Framework (Cycle 2) was endorsed as per the Council of Ministers' Resolution No.17 of 2019. Thereof, in the academic year (2019-2020), the DHR commenced its second cycle of programme reviews.

The Cycle 2 APR Review Framework is based on four main Standards and 21 Indicators, which forms the basis of the APR Reports of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

The **four** standards that are used to determine whether or not a programme meets international standards are as follows:

Standard 1: **The Learning Programme**

Standard 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

Standard 3: **Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**

Standard 4: **Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') decides whether each indicator, within a standard, is 'addressed', 'partially addressed' or 'not addressed'. From these judgements on the indicators, the Panel additionally determines whether each of the four standards is 'Satisfied' or 'Not Satisfied', thus leading to the programme's overall judgement, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

Criteria	Judgement
All four Standards are satisfied	Confidence
Two or three Standards are satisfied, including Standard 1	Limited Confidence
One or no Standard is satisfied	No Confidence
All cases where **Standard 1** is not satisfied	

The APR Review Report begins with providing the profile of the programme under review, followed by a brief outline of the judgement received for each indicator, standard, and the overall judgement.

The main section of the report is an analysis of the status of the programme, at the time of its actual review, in relation to the review standards, indicators and their underlying expectations.

The report ends with a Conclusion and a list of Appreciations and Recommendations.

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II.   The Programme's Profile

Institution Name*	Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance
College/ Department*	Academic Studies Centre
Programme/ Qualification Title*	Bachelor of Science in Economics and Management
Qualification Approval Number	-
NQF Level	-
Validity Period on NQF	-
Number of Units*	12
NQF Credit	-
Programme Aims*	1) Provide a high-quality education in Economics and Management for intellectually able students from a wide range of backgrounds. 2) Give students a sound grasp of the principles of economic analysis to the intermediate level. 3) Help students understand the social science basis and inter-disciplinary nature of Management. 4) Give students a knowledge of the workings of the economy. 5) Enable students to concentrate on specialist areas within the subjects. 6) Encourage students to develop intellectual flexibility and powers of rigorous analysis, by placing a premium on developing minds and on bringing forward their analytical reasoning ability. 7) Develop in students the ability to apply their knowledge to the solution of theoretical and applied problems in economics and management. 8) Provide a basis for further study and for employment, including careers in relevant fields. 9) Prepare students for graduate study in economics and/or management.

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Programme Intended Learning Outcomes*	**Knowledge and Understanding:** • Understand the fundamental aspects of economic analysis. • Analyse issues from the perspective of a number of disciplines. • Think in a critical manner, to formulate and develop arguments, both on management and economic issues in a logical manner. • Demonstrate skills in applying economic reasoning to the analysis of a wide range of policy issues. **Intellectual and cognitive Skills:** • Locate, extract, analyse and draw reasoned conclusions from multiple sources (including electronic sources) of appropriate literature and relevant data and acknowledge and reference sources appropriately. • Critically analyse arguments. • Apply theory and theoretical models in practical situations. • Assimilate and lucidly evaluate alternative views. **Transferable Skills:** • Communicate effectively in a written context. • Use information technology (spreadsheets, word-processing and online databases) appropriately. • Organise information, and to assimilate and evaluate competing arguments. • Manage their own learning, including working effectively to deadlines. • Be open-minded and have a capacity to handle ideas and scrutinise information in critical, evaluative and analytical ways.

* Mandatory fields

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III. Judgement Summary

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">The Programme's Judgement:
Confidence</td></tr>
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Standard/ Indicator	Title	Judgement
Standard 1	**The Learning Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 1.1	The Academic Planning Framework	Addressed
Indicator 1.2	Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes	Addressed
Indicator 1.3	The Curriculum Content	Addressed
Indicator 1.4	Teaching and Learning	Partially Addressed
Indicator 1.5	Assessment Arrangements	Partially Addressed
Standard 2	**Efficiency of the Programme**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 2.1	Admitted Students	Addressed
Indicator 2.2	Academic Staff	Partially Addressed
Indicator 2.3	Physical and Material Resources	Addressed
Indicator 2.4	Management Information Systems	Addressed
Indicator 2.5	Student Support	Partially Addressed
Standard 3	**Academic Standards of Students and Graduates**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 3.1	Efficiency of the Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.2	Academic Integrity	Addressed
Indicator 3.3	Internal and External Moderation of Assessment	Addressed
Indicator 3.4	Work-based Learning	Not Applicable

Indicator 3.5	Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component	Not Applicable
Indicator 3.6	Achievements of the Graduates	Addressed
Standard 4	**Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance**	**Satisfied**
Indicator 4.1	Quality Assurance Management	Addressed
Indicator 4.2	Programme Management and Leadership	Addressed
Indicator 4.3	Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme	Addressed
Indicator 4.4	Benchmarking and Surveys	Partially Addressed
Indicator 4.5	Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs	Partially Addressed

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IV. Standards and Indicators

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Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

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Indicator 1.1: The Academic Planning Framework

There is a clear academic planning framework for the programme, reflected in clear aims which relate to the mission and strategic goals of the institution and the college.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The Bachelor of Science in Economics and Management (BScE&M) programme is part of the Economics, Management, Finance and Social Sciences (EMFSS) suite of programmes offered by the University of London (UoL) under the academic direction of the London School of Economics (LSE), which is one of UoL's 17 Federation members. The BScE&M is a distance learning programme developed by the LSE in line with UoL's Programme Approval Policy and guidelines. As per the Self-Evaluation Report (SER), the planning process ensures that the programme is aligned with UoL's strategy of developing programmes for a 'global audience'.

- The BScE&M programme title is concise and indicative of the qualification's type and content, and has been accurately documented on certificates, in marketing materials and on the website of the Institute for Banking and Finance (BIBF). The programme has been aligned with the UK's Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Office for Students (OfS) Sector-Recognised Standards, as well as UoL's Credit and Qualifications Framework.

- The BScE&M programme has nine clearly expressed aims which are documented in the Programme Specification. The aims are broadly applicable to all students on the programme regardless of their location of study and they are reviewed during periodic programme reviews every five years.

- A valid binding agreement between BIBF and UoL is in operation and is regularly monitored through the Teaching Centres Annual Monitoring (TCAM) process and locally produced Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs). The agreement clearly states the

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obligations and responsibilities of each institution, the award details and the applicable policies with respect to the academic provision and student support.

- UoL has oversight of the key academic risks related to BScE&M programme, which are mitigated by the implementation of the Teaching Centres Recognition Framework (TCRF). As an RTC, the BIBF must meet specific obligations to retain its RTC status and this includes complying with UoL's Quality Assurance (QA) procedures and reporting requirements. The Panel noted from the available documentation and interviews with stakeholders that low enrollments on the BScE&M have led UoL to consider withdrawing the programme if future enrollment targets are not met. However, the RTC agreement between UoL and BIBF does not have clearly laid out provisions for teach-out arrangements in this case. The Panel, therefore, recommends that the BIBF and UoL/LSE should actively monitor programme risks related to student enrolments and coordinate with the University of London to formalize appropriate teaching-out plans, ensuring students can complete their programme of study.

Indicator 1.2: Graduate Attributes & Intended Learning Outcomes

Graduate attributes are clearly stated in terms of intended learning outcomes for the programme and for each course and these are appropriate for the level of the degree and meet the NQF requirements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- UoL emphasizes the development of 'a broad range of transferable and technical expertise' among students. Starting in 2024, all EMFSS Course Information Sheets included three 'key graduate skills' aligned with the top ten employability skills identified by UoL's careers centre. The Panel acknowledges the integration of these employability skills into the courses and suggests further alignment with Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) to ensure their systematic evaluation.

- The programme has clearly stated PILOs which are included in the Programme Specification. The 13 outcomes are categorised into knowledge and understanding (4 PILOs), intellectual and cognitive skills (4 PILOs) and transferable skills (5 PILOs). All of the outcomes are appropriate for the type and level of award and consistent with the expectations of a Bachelor of Science degree based on UoL's alignment of the qualification with the FHEQ and OfS Sector-Recognised Standards, as well as the UK's Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements for Business, Management and Economics.

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- Each course in the programme includes CILOs, which are detailed in the Course Information Sheets. These outcomes are well-suited to the course level and content. The alignment of CILOs with PILOs is validated during the programme approval process with input from external subject specialists and oversight by the International Programmes Board (IPB) at the LSE. To enhance clarity and transparency, the Panel suggests including a mapping matrix of CILOs to PILOs, as well as their alignment with employability skills, within the Programme Specification document and Course Information Sheets. This would provide students with a clear understanding of how courses and assessments are connected to intended learning outcomes, while also supporting the evaluation of student achievement.

Indicator 1.3: The Curriculum Content

The curriculum is organised to provide academic progression of learning complexity guided by the NQF levels and credits, and it illustrates a balance between knowledge and skills, as well as theory and practice, and meets the norms and standards of the particular academic discipline.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The BScE&M study plan consists of eleven 30-credit and two 15-credit modules which are studied over a three-year period. Students begin with 100-level introductory courses and progress to more specialised and in-depth 200 and 300-level courses, with appropriate pre-requisites to ensure they build on their knowledge as they progress. In addition, students must complete a suite of Higher Education Council (HEC) mandated courses.

- The curriculum is developed by the LSE based on UoL's focus on global competencies since its programmes are delivered across more than 30 RTCs worldwide. While the BScE&M programme does not have any localised curriculum content, ensuring appropriate contextualization falls on the RTCs, and BIBF in this instance. Local teaching staff who deliver the programme in Bahrain include local case studies and examples in the delivery, and students are exposed to industry speakers, which complements and grounds the curriculum in the local context. The strength of the curriculum was highlighted to the Panel by internal and external stakeholders, such as students, alumni and employers, and is further evidenced by robust employment outcomes of graduates (see Indicator 3.6). The Panel, therefore, appreciates the rigorous curriculum, combining appropriate depth and breadth while incorporating relevant local knowledge and practices.

- Information about courses is provided in the Course Information Sheets, although the Panel notes that these are quite brief and do not provide the breadth of information that is typically presented in a course syllabus. Some of the assigned textbooks listed in the Course Information Sheets are not current editions. More detailed study guides are developed for each course, but they are not revised every academic year. As the Course

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Information Sheet contains definitive information about a course, including the learning outcomes, assessments and required resources, the Panel recommends that the Course Information Sheets are reviewed and updated to include comprehensive information needed by students to undertake a course, including the most recent editions of textbooks.

Indicator 1.4: Teaching and Learning

The principles and methods used for teaching in the programme support the attainment of programme aims and intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The BIBF is responsible for providing teaching and support to students enrolled in BScE&M courses. The BIBF Teaching and Learning Policy emphasizes active learning and hybrid delivery methods. However, the BScE&M programme and course documents do not include comprehensive information about the teaching and learning methods employed in face-to-face sessions or online *via* MyClass which is used by the BIBF local teaching staff. Furthermore, the teaching staff consists entirely of locally employed individuals, the majority of whom work on a part-time basis. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the Programme Specification and Course Information Sheets be revised to include relevant information about teaching and learning methods on the programme.

- Students have access to a variety of resources *via* the LSE's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), including learning materials, tutorial activities, study support tools, past examination papers, reading lists, and webinars. However, the Panel noted that students have limited opportunities to engage with professional practice and to develop their research skills, creativity, and innovation within the programme. It was also noted by the Panel during the interviews that most of the classes and teaching on the programme were directed specifically at passing the final examinations, rather than achieving the learning outcomes. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF should provide students with additional learning opportunities aimed at fostering students' research capabilities, creativity, and innovation.

Indicator 1.5: Assessment Arrangements

Suitable assessment arrangements, which include policies and procedures for assessing students' achievements, are in place and are known to all relevant stakeholders.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- UoL and LSE oversee the assessment process for the BScE&M programme. The assessments are outlined in the Course Information Sheets and typically involve a 3-hour

final examination, with all CILOs evaluated through a single instrument. All final examinations are blind double-marked and samples from various RTCs are scrutinised by External Examiners.

- The teaching staff at BIBF develop tests and mock examinations, which are provided to students through MyClass. These assessments are considered formative, as they do not count toward the students' final grades but help them recognize their strengths and areas needing improvement ahead of the final examinations. However, these assessments are not reviewed or approved by the Course Convenors at the LSE, who oversee the design and grading of final examinations. Additionally, they do not adequately offer timely feedback on students' progress and performance throughout the duration of each course until the final examination, which is crucial for effective learning. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should enhance formative assessments and learning activities designed to prepare students for final examinations, ensuring they are supported in monitoring and improving their performance.

- UoL has established Procedures for the Consideration of Allegations of Assessment Offences, which include comprehensive guidelines for managing academic misconduct. Since examinations are conducted off campus at the British Council, BIBF is not directly involved in this process. UoL's Procedure for Student Complaints and Academic Appeals is followed to address appeals, with the provision that students may not submit an appeal against an assessment result based on academic grounds.

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Standard 2

Efficiency of the Programme

The programme is efficient in terms of the admitted students, the use of available resources - staffing, infrastructure and student support.

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Indicator 2.1: Admitted Students

There are clear admission requirements, which are appropriate for the level and type of the programme, ensuring equal opportunities for both genders, and the profile of admitted students matches the programme aims and available resources.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The admission policy is clear, upholds high entry standards and offers opportunities for students who may not typically meet the usual entry requirements to apply. There are also equal opportunities for both female and male students to gain acceptance into the programme. Remedial support is provided with the aim of enhancing the students' academic experience, though not at the expense of compromising the assessment process or adversely affecting access. This is facilitated through an International Foundation Programme.

- The admission policy is regularly reviewed by UoL, and changes have been made to the English proficiency requirements as a result. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is available for students who have studied for a previous qualification, provided the content and level are comparable to the programme's standards. In such cases, students may benefit from RPL and gain exemptions from specific courses within the BScE&M programme.

- To ensure admission requirements are consistent with local academic standards, all admitted students must satisfy the General Entry Requirements relating to Bahrain, a minimum age of admission of 17 years, plus Mathematics at UK GCSE Level (Grade C) or equivalent. Applicants with alternative or incomplete qualifications or work experience are also considered on their individual merit. The Panel was provided with recent data on entry qualification levels, which indicate a wide but appropriate range of acceptable entry qualifications among students on the programme.

Indicator 2.2: Academic Staff

There are clear procedures for the recruitment, induction, appraisal, promotion, and professional development of academic staff, which ensure that staff members are fit-for-purpose and that help in staff retention.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- Procedures related to local Human Resources (HR) are clear and transparent. The initial screening and selection of local teaching staff at BIBF is carried out by the HR Department which has an oversight of recruitment, retention, compensation and employee benefits, employee relations, professional development and performance management. The curriculum vitae of all applicants who are considered for teaching on the programme are sent to the LSE where they are approved by the Academic Coordinator. This is done once for each teaching staff when they deliver the course for the first time. Subsequent approvals to teach the same course are not required. In addition to relevant disciplinary expertise, previous teaching experience, a minimum qualification at Masters level in a relevant discipline, and preferably a PhD are required, according to the TCRF agreement.

- All new teaching staff at BIBF receive an induction that includes mentoring opportunities, while LSE provides support for using the VLE. Site visit interviews revealed that almost all teaching staff on the programme are employed part-time, with limited opportunities for promotion or continuous professional development. The qualifications of local teaching staff vary significantly, with not all meeting the Master's-level requirement outlined in the TCRF agreement, and many teaching across multiple academic programmes, sometimes outside their areas of expertise. During the extension visit, the Panel observed continued reliance on part-time staff and noted challenges related to stability and continuity. Up to six part-time staff teach various courses each academic year, with new staff appointed annually. In 2024-2025, three part-time staff members were replaced shortly after the academic year began. This high turnover disrupts teaching and negatively affects the student experience, as reflected in declining student satisfaction rates. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the BIBF should reduce reliance on part-time teaching staff and establish a more rigorous recruitment process to ensure local staff are suitably qualified and equipped to teach the programme.

- Site visit interviews indicated that local teaching staff at BIBF have access to training opportunities through the LSE's Eden Centre to enhance their teaching methods. However, it was also observed that participation in these opportunities by local teaching staff on the programme remains low. During the extension visit, the Panel was informed that additional professional development opportunities would be provided based on training needs identified in performance appraisals. The Panel also learned that discussions between BIBF and UoL regarding a Postgraduate Certificate in teaching for full-time local staff are ongoing but remain at an early stage. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should actively encourage BScE&M teaching staff to participate in training opportunities offered by BIBF, UoL, and LSE to enhance teaching quality and professional development.

Indicator 2.3: Physical and Material Resources

Physical and material resources are adequate in number, space, style and equipment; these include classrooms, teaching halls, laboratories and other study spaces; Information Technology facilities, library and learning resources.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The BIBF's campus includes modern classrooms, advanced computer laboratories, and an impressive range of Information Technology (IT) and other equipment, such as smart screens, interactive whiteboards, and motion-activated cameras. It features 20 hybrid classrooms, and an Assessment Centre designed to provide career guidance and training. During the interviews, students confirmed that the physical and material resources were of a very high standard. The Panel members had the opportunity to visit the campus and view a video and photographs of the facilities available on campus.

- The BIBF library provides both physical and electronic resources to assist students in self-study and MyClass activities. Usage of MyClass and other IT resources, including the online library, is actively monitored. Students also benefit from access to LSE's library resources *via* the VLE. During the site visit, students confirmed that the online library resources available through both the BIBF and LSE are adequate and generally accessible. The Panel appreciates the high quality contemporary physical and material resources provided to support BSCE&M students.

- Responsibility for overall maintenance of IT resources and buildings lies with the IT and Operations Departments respectively, under the Chief Operations Officer. The BIBF IT team operates a 'Helpdesk' system for both staff and students and carries out frequent and regular checks on devices and equipment. This process is respondent to student feedback. Logs of all IT and maintenance issues are kept, along with regular checks by the local authorities in relation to health and safety policies and procedures which are required to comply with national health and safety standards. Moreover, minor medical support and advice is available *via* a dedicated nurse.

Indicator 2.4: Management Information Systems

There are functioning management information and tracking systems that support the decision-making processes and evaluate the utilisation of laboratories, e-learning and e-resources, along with policies and procedures that ensure security of learners' records and accuracy of results.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- BIBF and UoL have separate management information systems for maintaining and managing students' data. BIBF uses the Student Information System (SIS) to manage student records, enrolment, invoicing, and integration with MyClass. During the site visit,

the Panel observed that all programme students were registered on SIS. Both students and staff confirmed access to relevant information through the system. UoL uses its student records system to manage enrolment data and course grades, which are not stored on the local BIBF SIS. During interviews, the Panel learned that the UoL Assessment Team is responsible for receiving and recording all student marks. Clear policies and procedures are in place for this process, and discussions with UoL and LSE staff assured the Panel that it is handled effectively.

- The security of students' records and accuracy of results is maintained by UoL, with appropriate security policies in place. UoL Transcripts Department is responsible for the timely issuance of awarded certificates, while the UoL Registry Team is responsible for all aspects of students' registration. The Panel was able to view sample transcripts which clearly set out the learning achievements of the students on the programme with an appropriate breakdown of grades for each course. Students confirmed in interviews that they received their certificates and transcripts in a timely manner from UoL.

Indicator 2.5: Student Support

There is appropriate student support available in terms of guidance, and care for students including students with special needs, newly admitted and transferred students, and students at risk of academic failure.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- There are sound policies and practices for student support both at BIBF and UoL in terms of the library, online learning environment, career support and pastoral care. The Academic Centre at BIBF is responsible for providing all new students with the relevant programme information by way of an induction at the beginning of the academic year. Students are also provided with a BIBF Student Handbook and UoL Student Guide which cover rules, regulations, and the student code of conduct. In terms of students with special needs, UoL has the Inclusive Practice Policy and the Exam Access Arrangement Policy to help students with disabilities and other medical or special needs.

- BScE&M students have access to a student advice centre, a student email account, and well-being resources. They are also provided with career pathway guidance by BIBF and UoL. They have access to a range of online career support resources through a dedicated Careers VLE at UoL, including live and asynchronous webinars and workshops, group coaching sessions as well as artificial intelligence-informed tools for writing resumes.

- During the site visit, the Panel noted that most teaching staff, being part-time, provide only informal assistance beyond their contractual hours. The policy requiring weekly 'office hours' for teaching staff appears to be unimplemented, and there is no formal

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process in place to identify or monitor students at risk of academic failure. During the extension visit, the Panel noted that the academic advising arrangements remained unchanged. Although advising guidelines had been developed, the Programme Manager continues to provide academic advice to all students in the programme. The Panel was informed that once the newly recruited full-time teaching staff are settled and trained, they would assume academic advising responsibilities.

- Currently, academic advising notes are recorded in Calendly, the appointment scheduling software used at BIBF. However, the Panel is of the view that this tool is unsuitable for formal record-keeping of students' academic progress, as it is not integrated with their academic records. During the extension visit, the Panel was informed that a strict attendance requirement has been imposed based on guidelines provided by the LSE and students whose attendance falls below the required threshold (80%) will be barred from doing the final examination. This is intended to ensure students maintain their academic progress by regularly attending classes. Teaching staff are notified by the Programme Manager if a student's attendance declines, and the students are then provided with informal guidance by the local instructors. The Panel acknowledges BIBF's recent initiatives to monitor students' attendance; however, these efforts are not linked to any formal processes for identifying 'at risk' students based on their academic performance. Therefore, the Panel recommends that BIBF should enhance the academic advising process by actively involving local teaching staff and ensuring formal record-keeping of students' academic progress. The Panel also recommends that BIBF should establish formal mechanisms to identify 'at risk' students and provide them with targeted support to ensure higher programme completion rates. (see Indicator 3.6)

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Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

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Indicator 3.1: Efficiency of the Assessment

The assessment is effective and aligned with learning outcomes, to ensure attainment of the graduate attributes and academic standards of the programme.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- As noted earlier in Indicators 1.2 and 1.5, all courses in the programme, along with their respective CILOs, are assessed through a single summative final examination carrying 100% weighting, which is set and marked by the LSE. External Examiners are responsible for verifying that the examination questions align with the CILOs. The LSE mandates an overall average pass rate of 60%, which all RTCs are required to meet. To ensure graduates meet the PILOs and the newly introduced employability skills, which have replaced graduate attributes, indirect mechanisms such as BIBF surveys are employed; however, these surveys are not shared with the UoL (see Indicator 4.4).

- The practical implementation of the assessment process is a collaborative effort between staff at UoL and LSE. Final examinations are effectively managed, with the Chief and Deputy Chief Examiner at LSE responsible for developing examination papers, which are then reviewed by the Chairs of the Board of Examiners and External Examiners. Following marking, the final grades are processed by the Student Assessment Office (see Indicator 3.3).

Indicator 3.2: Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is ensured through the consistent implementation of relevant policies and procedures that deter plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct (e.g. cheating, forging of results, and commissioning others to do the work).

Judgement: *Addressed*

- There are comprehensive policies and procedures addressing academic integrity in various forms. These include information and guidance to prevent plagiarism and promote good academic practices, which are detailed in the Programme and General

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Regulations, Assessment Resources, the UoL Student Guide and on the VLE. Any suspected irregularities are addressed promptly, with sanctions outlined in the Programme and General Regulations and the LSE Assessment Offence Procedures. LSE staff reported a significant rise in cheating or attempted cheating during the pandemic, which was effectively mitigated through the full digitalization of the examination process.

Indicator 3.3: Internal and External Moderation of Assessment

There are mechanisms in place to measure the effectiveness of the programme's internal and external moderation systems for setting assessment instruments and grading students' achievements.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- UoL and LSE maintain robust moderation processes. Examination papers, drafted by the Chief Examiner and approved by the Course Convenor, are reviewed by External Examiners for feedback and revisions. There are two versions of the examinations (Zone A and Zone B) to account for the differences in time zones at various RTCs. For quantitative courses, additional verification is conducted through 'paper-testing' by a PhD student who takes the examination.

- The final version, approved by the programme Academic Coordinator, is sent to UoL, which oversees administration online or at RTCs. Examinations also undergo blind double-marking and post-moderation to ensure thresholds are met, including potential mark scaling. Random samples are reviewed by External Examiners to confirm fair marking and alignment with national and international standards.

- UoL follows rigorous procedures for appointing External Examiners, who are actively involved in the examination process, including the Examination Board where final marks are confirmed. They receive an online induction through a secure portal. Across the 20 programmes in the EMFSS suite, there are 13 External Examiners, whose role is to review assessments for specific groups of courses rather than oversee entire programmes. The External Examiners Reports submitted by UoL confirms that the external moderation process is robust.

Indicator 3.4: Work-based Learning

Where assessed work-based learning takes place, there is a policy and procedures to manage the process and its assessment, to assure that the learning experience is appropriate in terms of content and level for meeting the intended learning outcomes.

Judgement: *Not Applicable*

Indicator 3.5: Capstone Project or Thesis/Dissertation Component

Where there is a capstone project or thesis/dissertation component, there are clear policies and procedures for supervision and evaluation which state the responsibilities and duties of both the supervisor and students, and there is a mechanism to monitor the related implementations and improvements.

Judgement: *Not Applicable*

Indicator 3.6: Achievements of the Graduates

The achievements of the graduates are consonant with those achieved on equivalent programmes as expressed in their assessed work, rates of progression and first destinations.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- The Panel reviewed samples of students' assessments and External Examiner reports, which demonstrated an overall achievement level aligned with a Bachelor degree programme in Economics and Management. Student progression data was included in the SER and supporting evidence. Analysis of the data in the SER revealed low completion rates and enrolment figures. Only 50% of students from the 2018-2019 cohort successfully graduated, whereas the entire 2019-2020 cohort withdrew during their first year (refer to the recommendations under Indicator 2.5).

- During the extension visit, the Panel found that monitoring student progression and completion rates on the programme remains a challenge due to limited information sharing between the BIBF and UoL and significant delays in producing key reports such as the RTC annual monitoring report generated by UoL and the AMR prepared by BIBF. Both reports are finalized more than six months after the academic year has ended and the subsequent academic year is well under way. However, student progression and completion rates that were made available to the Panel during the extension visit show some improvements.

- BIBF monitors graduate destinations and conducts alumni surveys. Despite the low number of programme completions, graduates are highly regarded by employers. Graduate employment stands at around 85%, with most alumni securing full-time positions. During the site visit, the Panel met three graduates employed in prestigious investment organisations in Bahrain, who attributed their career success to the programme. The Panel appreciates the high employment rate of graduates and the strong demand for them in the local job market.

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Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

The arrangements in place for managing the programme, including quality assurance and continuous improvement, contribute to giving confidence in the programme.

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Indicator 4.1: Quality Assurance Management

There is a clear quality assurance management system, in relation to the programme that ensures the institution's policies, procedures and regulations are applied effectively and consistently.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- UoL and LSE have QA frameworks and systems along with associated processes, policies and procedures and mechanisms which are based on QAA requirements and applied to the programme. The QA schedule constitutes part of the TCRF agreement to ensure that QA policies and regulations are consistently implemented on the programme in Bahrain. The Panel found evidence of this in certain areas (see Indicator 4.3), but there was limited evidence in other areas (see Indicator 4.4).

- Locally, BIBF has its own QA policies and procedures and undertakes internal quality audits, although it is not responsible for quality assuring the programme. The Panel was informed that policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated, with staff being informed of changes. This was confirmed during interviews in which staff showed a robust awareness of relevant QA processes. However, according to the TCRF agreement this is the exclusive responsibility of UoL with the LSE. Furthermore, BIBF and UoL do not share any stakeholder feedback with each other that is collected *via* surveys or other means. The lack of interaction between UoL and BIBF QA systems has created 'silos' in which both institutions are being deprived of key stakeholder feedback, which is critical for QA, in addition to duplicated efforts in some areas. The Panel, therefore, suggests that UoL and BIBF QA processes are better aligned to facilitate an integrated, coordinated and collaborative approach to QA, and avoid duplication of efforts.

Indicator 4.2: Programme Management and Leadership

The programme is managed in a way that demonstrates effective and responsible leadership and there are clear lines of accountability.

Judgement: *Addressed*

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- The Panel was provided with the organisational charts for the BIBF and the EMFSS, in addition to the structure of UoL committees. The TCRF agreement details the responsibilities of each institution and the management arrangements for the programme. An Academic Coordinator has overall responsibility for the programme at UoL, while individual courses are developed by Course Convenors. There is a counterpart at LSE who is the Senior Programme Manager, with LSE responsible for academic direction.

- Locally at the BIBF, an Assistant Manager has been appointed to oversee the administrative arrangements at the BIBF. The Assistant Manager liaises with UoL and LSE but reports to the Head of the Academic Centre at BIBF. The Panel was satisfied that all the individuals involved in managing the programme in the UK and Bahrain were experienced and understood their roles and responsibilities.

- The committee structure at UoL encompasses a full spectrum of committees that support programme delivery and management, with the Academic Quality Assurance Committee playing a central role in ensuring academic standards. At BIBF, the Educational Standards Committee is responsible for overseeing learning quality; however, its discussions focus on learners' achievements and stakeholders' feedback on a general level, rather than addressing programme-specific matters.

- The stipulations in the TCRF agreement and their implementation in practice demonstrate that an 'equivalent quality of education' has been achieved, with UoL and LSE ensuring the provision of the required course materials and resources through the VLE. Students confirmed to the Panel that they had access to the online library and other electronic resources at the LSE.

Indicator 4.3: Annual and Periodic Review of the Programme

There are arrangements for annual internal evaluation and periodic reviews of the programme that incorporate both internal and external feedback and mechanisms are in place to implement recommendations for improvement.

Judgement: *Addressed*

- UoL's Quality Assurance Mechanism provides a framework for annual quality assurance monitoring and periodic review, to ensure continuous quality improvement and enhancement. The outcomes of the annual monitoring and quinquennial reviews are presented in UoL's Annual Monitoring Report which includes an assessment of the programme standards, good practices and changes, and ends with an action plan for the following academic year. A TCAM report is also produced every year for each RTC, including the BIBF which summarises student enrolments, performance and staffing data.

- Locally, the Academic Centre at BIBF produces its own Academic Performance Report which also contains a summary of students' performance as well as their feedback on the programme, teaching, resources and support provided. Recommendations for improvements are included in the Performance Report, albeit of a general rather than programme-specific nature. The annual monitoring and performance reports produced by UoL and BIBF are not shared between the institutions.

- The latest periodic review was conducted by the EMFSS in 2022. It included a comprehensive evaluation of the programme involving internal and external stakeholders and resulted in eight key recommendations. The recommendations include the need to implement a 'more proactive developmental approach for teaching staff at RTCs' which the Panel agrees with based on its findings, and the need to enhance communication with students and address long response times to students' enquiries (see Indicator 4.4).

Indicator 4.4: Benchmarking and Surveys

Benchmarking studies and the structured comments collected from stakeholders' surveys are analysed and the outcomes are used to inform decisions on programmes and are made available to the stakeholders.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The programme has been benchmarked against the QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements which is a common programme development practice in the UK. The LSE does not have any internal benchmarking policies and relies on the Subject Benchmark Statements and benchmarking documentation from the OfS. Regular updates to the curriculum were noted by the Panel in UoL's Annual Monitoring Reports which provided evidence of ongoing benchmarking to ensure the programme remained current.

- Several mechanisms are in place to collect stakeholder feedback. Locally at BIBF, students complete a course evaluation survey at the end of each course. There is also a Graduate Exit Survey which provides key insights into the students' experience on the programme. This survey is a key instrument that covers teaching and learning, resources, and support services, with results specific to the programme. However, despite providing important insights into the programme, the survey results are not shared with UoL and they are not used in informing programme changes or decisions. Alumni surveys have also been recently introduced while employer surveys are planned.

- UoL administers a Student Experience Survey annually which more than 10,000 responses from students across various RTCs, although no disaggregated data is available for Bahrain. The course evaluation survey has been conducted only since September 2023 but

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there are no mechanisms to filter the analysis of the results by RTC. UoL acknowledged in the site visit interviews with the Panel that it was looking at more effective ways to engage more closely with RTCs and monitor the students' experience. The Panel agrees that this is necessary. The Student Voice Group (SVG) is another key UoL tool for collecting feedback from students to inform decision-making; however, there is no evidence of students from Bahrain being represented on the SVG. The Panel recommends that BIBF should establish effective mechanisms for systematically gathering feedback from both internal and external programme stakeholders at BIBF and ensure that this feedback is incorporated into the programme decision-making process, taking into consideration the experiences of Bahraini students.

Indicator 4.5: Relevance to Labour market and Societal Needs

The programme has a functioning advisory board and there is continuous scoping of the labour market and the national and societal needs, where appropriate for the programme type, to ensure the relevancy and currency of the programme.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

- The LSE International Programmes Board is responsible for ensuring that the programme is current and relevant to the labour market. The Board oversees the full suite of the EMFSS programmes. The Panel noted from the meeting minutes provided that there are no external representatives on the Board, and it consists entirely of LSE Academic Coordinators and other staff members. The Panel also noted that discussions at the meetings are mainly related to academic and operational issues.

- The Academic Centre at BIBF has its own advisory board which provides market feedback on all of the academic programmes offered by the Centre. The Board does not give input into the programme curriculum but focuses on its marketability and standing in the local market in relation to competitors. The Panel concludes, therefore, that a dedicated advisory board with relevant external stakeholders (e.g., alumni, employers) to support the programme is not in place, and there is limited input from both the LSE International Programmes Board and the local advisory board which can be used to inform the programme. In light of the low enrollments and completion rates, the Panel recommends that BIBF should establish a local advisory board for the BScE&M programme which provides relevant feedback that can be used to systematically inform decision-making and improve enrollments and completion rates.

- BIBF conducted an institutional Market Analysis in May 2022 to have a clearer understanding of the local labour market requirements, especially in terms of emerging themes and areas that are in line with local and international trends. The results highlighted employers' focus on incorporating skills related to soft skills, such as

'analytical thinking and innovation, leadership and social influence'. During the interviews with external stakeholders, the Panel received testimonials highlighting the relevance of the programme to the local societal needs with reference to relevant employability skills, such as critical thinking and ethics. However, external stakeholders agree that the programme could be enhanced by incorporating a work-based learning component. This highlights the need for improved teaching and assessment methods (see Indicators 1.4 and 1.5).

V. Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the virtual site visit and extension visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA Academic Programme Reviews (Cycle 2) Handbook, 2020:

There is confidence in the Bachelor of Science in Economics and Management, a distance learning programme delivered through the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, as one of the recognized teaching centres of the University of London.

In coming to its conclusion regarding the four Standards, the Panel notes, *with appreciation*, the following:

1. The rigorous curriculum combining appropriate depth and breadth while incorporating relevant local knowledge and practices.

2. The high quality contemporary physical and material resources provided to support BSCE&M students.

3. The high employment rate of the BScE&M graduates and the strong demand for them in the local job market.

In terms of improvement, the Panel recommends that the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance should:

1. Actively monitor programme risks related to student enrolments and coordinate with the University of London to formalize appropriate teach-out plans, ensuring students can complete their programme of study.

2. Review and update the Course Information Sheets in coordination with the University of London, to include comprehensive information needed by students to undertake a course, including the most recent editions of textbooks.

3. Revise the Programme Specification and Course Information Sheets in coordination with the University of London, to include relevant information about teaching and learning methods on the programme.

4. Provide students with additional learning opportunities aimed at fostering students' research capabilities, creativity, and innovation.

5. Enhance formative assessments and learning activities designed to prepare students for final examinations, ensuring they are supported in monitoring and improving their performance.

6. Reduce reliance on part-time teaching staff and establish a more rigorous recruitment process to ensure local staff are suitably qualified and equipped to teach the programme.

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7. Actively encourage BScE&M teaching staff to participate in training opportunities offered by BIBF, UoL, and LSE to enhance teaching quality and professional development.

8. Enhance the academic advising process by actively involving local teaching staff and ensuring formal record-keeping of students' academic progress.

9. Establish formal mechanisms to identify 'at risk' students and provide them with targeted support to ensure higher programme completion rates.

10. Establish effective mechanisms for systematically gathering feedback from both internal and external programme stakeholders at the BIBF and ensure that this feedback is incorporated into the programme decision-making process, taking into consideration the experiences of Bahraini students.

11. Establish a local advisory board for the BScE&M programme which provides relevant feedback that can be used to systematically inform decision-making and improve enrollments and completion rate.

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