هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
Kingdom of Bahrain - مملكة البحرين

Directorate of Higher Education Reviews

Programmes-within-College Reviews Report

Confidential

Master in Psychological Counseling

College of Arts

University of Bahrain

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date of the Review: 5-9 November 2017

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Acronyms

BQA	Education and Training Quality Authority
CGPA	Cumulative Grade Point Average
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
DHR	Directorate of Higher Education Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
HoD	Head of the Department
ILOs	Intended Learning Outcomes
MIS	Management Information Systems
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation Centre
QAO	Quality Assurance Office
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
UOB	University of Bahrain

The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process

A.   The Programmes-within-College Reviews Framework

To meet the need to have a robust external quality assurance system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) has developed and is implementing two external quality review processes, namely: Institutional Reviews and Programmes-within-College Reviews which together will give confidence in Bahrain's higher education system nationally, regionally and internationally.

Programmes-within-College Reviews have three main objectives:

- to provide decision-makers (in the higher education institutions, the BQA, the Higher Education Council (HEC), students and their families, prospective employers of graduates and other stakeholders) with evidence-based judgements on the quality of learning programmes
- to support the development of internal quality assurance processes with information on emerging good practices and challenges, evaluative comments and continuing improvement
- to enhance the reputation of Bahrain's higher education regionally and internationally.

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

Indicator 1: **The Learning Programme**

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

Indicator 2: **Efficiency of the Programme**

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

Indicator 3: **Academic Standards of the Graduates**

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

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

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

The Review Panel (hereinafter referred to as 'the Panel') states in the Review Report whether the programme satisfies each Indicator. If the programme satisfies all four Indicators, the concluding statement will say that there is 'confidence' in the programme.

If two or three Indicators are satisfied, including Indicator 1, the programme will receive a 'limited confidence' judgement. If one or no Indicator is satisfied, or Indicator 1 is not satisfied, the judgement will be 'no confidence', as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Criteria for Judgements

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

B. The Programmes-within-College Reviews Process at the University of Bahrain

A Programmes-within-College review of the University of Bahrain (UoB) was conducted by the DHR of the BQA in terms of its mandate to review the quality of higher education in Bahrain. The site visit took place on 5-9 November 2017 for the academic programmes offered by the College of Arts, these are: Bachelor in Mass Communication, Bachelor in Tourism, Master in Mass Communication, Bachelor in Sociology, Bachelor in History, Master in Psychological Counseling and Master in Measurement and Evaluation.

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

UoB was notified by the DHR/BQA in 6 March 2017 that it would be subject to a Programmes-within-College review of its College of Arts with the site visit taking place in November 2017. In preparation for the review, UoB conducted its college self-evaluation of all its programmes and submitted the SERs with appendices on the agreed date on 8 June 2017.

This Report provides an account of the review process and the findings of the Panel for the Master in Psychological Counseling programme based on:

(i) analysis of the SER and supporting materials submitted by the institution prior to the external peer-review visit

(ii) analysis derived from discussions with various stakeholders (faculty members, students, graduates and employers)

(iii) analysis based on additional documentation requested and presented to the Panel during the site visit.

It is expected that the UoB will use the findings presented in this Report to strengthen its Master in Psychological Counseling. The DHR recognizes that quality assurance is the responsibility of the higher education institution itself. Hence, it is the right of UoB to decide how it will address the recommendations contained in the Review Report. Nevertheless, three months after the publication of this Report, UoB is required to submit to the DHR an improvement plan in response to the recommendations.

The DHR would like to extend its thanks to UoB for the co-operative manner in which it has participated in the Programmes-within-College review process. It also wishes to express its appreciation for the open discussions held in the course of the review and the professional conduct of the faculty and administrative staff of the Master in Psychological Counseling.

C. Overview of the College of Arts

The College of Arts was originally established as a part of the University College of Arts, Science, and Education, which was founded by the Amiri Decree No. (11) in 1978. In 1986, the Amiri Decree No. (12) was issued to establish the UoB by merging the Gulf Polytechnic and the University College of Arts, Science and Education. The UoB included at this time: the College of Arts and Science, College of Education, College of Business Administration, and College of Engineering. In 1990, the Board of Trustees of UoB issued a decision to divide the College of Arts & Science into two separate colleges: the College of Arts and the College of Science. Currently, the UoB includes ten colleges. The College of Arts includes five departments, which are: the Department of Arabic Language and Islamic Studies, Department of English Language and Literature, Department of Social Sciences, Department of Psychology, Department of Mass Communication, Tourism and Fine Arts. The College offers Bachelor degree programmes across its five departments alongside postgraduate programmes at the master level. The mission of the College is focused on preparing intellectual and enlightened leaders equipped with mental and critical competences that strengthen their Arab and Islamic identity, the climate of freedom, cultural pluralism and respect for citizenship, and help in building knowledge, technology, culture and practical

skills, as well as, supporting scientific research and community services. At the time of the site visit, the College was employing (128) full-time faculty members, (69) part-time members, supported by (29) administrative staff. The total number of enrolled students was (5719) students.

D.   Overview of the Master in Psychological Counseling Programme

The Department of Psychology was established in 1978, and then it was actually transferred to the College of Arts in 2008. The Department currently offers two Master programmes, namely: the Master in Measurement and Evaluation and the Master in Psychological Counseling. The first cohort of the Master in Psychological Counseling programme was admitted in 2003. The programme was amended in 2007 by introducing modifications to its study plan. The number of the enrolled students in the programme was 32 at the time of the site visit, and there are eight faculty members contributing to the delivery of the courses of the programme. The total number of the programme's graduates from 2008 to the date of this visit was 94.

E.   Summary of Review Judgements

Table 2: Summary of Review Judgements for the Master in Psychological Counseling Programme

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

1. Indicator 1: The Learning Programme

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

1.1   UoB has a clear academic framework for offering the academic programmes, which is detailed in the System of Offering and Developing Academic Programmes and Courses in UoB. The SER states that the philosophy of the Master programme in Psychological Counseling is based on 'disseminating and deepening the culture of psychological counseling - especially - in the educational fields, and – generally - in the non-educational fields', as well as, 'informing the student of the importance and necessity of psychological counseling in addressing many psychological, educational, and social problems'. The Department of Psychology aims -through this programme - to provide 'distinguished postgraduate education and scientific research' in the psychology field, which contribute to the achievement of the mission and the vision of both the College and the University. Moreover, the programme has clear defined educational objectives, which are - in general - appropriate to the nature of the discipline and its scientific degree. These objectives are also consistent with the components of both the college and the university missions including: providing quality education and developing the practical skills and professional ethics of the graduates. The Panel appreciates that there are defined objectives for the programme that are relevant to the mission and the vision of both the College and the University, and are compatible with the nature of the discipline and the scientific level of the qualification.

1.2   The curriculum of the programme consists of (36) credit hours, of which (6) credit hours are dedicated to the master thesis, and the remaining (30) credit hours are allocated to (10) compulsory courses (3 credit hours per course). The study plan provides appropriate sequence and progression throughout the courses, as the student begins with theoretical foundational courses in the first semester, then moves to the second semester to study both theoretical and practical aspects in more depth, and finally study in-depth specialist advanced subjects, which require practical applications. The student begins his master thesis after he/she has completed his/her compulsory theoretical subjects. The Panel is of the view that the study plan of the programme provides an appropriate sequence, while the list of pre-requisites needs to be reviewed to become more specific. During the site visit interviews with the programme managers and faculty members, the Panel found that the programme does not include elective courses, and this was due to the small number of the enrolled students, which makes it difficult to implement a study plan including elective courses. In addition, there is no separate internship course in the study plan, and faculty members interviewed during the site visit indicated that this lack of a practical training component is compensated by practical assignments assigned to students

within the advanced courses that have practical applications such as 'Clinical Psychology' (PSYCH 570), and 'Abnormal Psychology' (PSYCH 563). By studying the course specifications, the Panel noted that these courses include practical aspects in a balanced manner. However, the Panel considers that this is not enough to achieve a balance between theoretical and practical aspects of the programme in general, which was confirmed by the interviewed employers during the site visit. In addition, the courses need to focus on counseling aspects more than clinical aspects, which can be enhanced by providing elective courses, through which the student can develop his/her knowledge and skills in certain trends of psychological counseling. Hence, the Panel appreciates that the study plan of the programme provides an appropriate sequence of knowledge and required skills, which allows semester-by-semester progression, and that the study workload is appropriate. However, the Panel recommends that the College should increase the practical content of the programme curriculum, to ensure achieving a better balance between theory and practice, and study the possibility of incorporating elective courses in the curriculum to enable the student to develop his/her knowledge and skills in specific trends of Psychological Counseling.

1.3   The specification of the courses of the programme is documented in a standard form issued by the Quality Assurance and Academic Accreditation Centre (QAAC) of the University. This specification includes the course content and its delivery throughout the semester, the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), the matrix of mapping the CILOs to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), the teaching methods, the CILOs assessment approaches, and the course references and scientific resources. By reviewing the SER and the course specification, the Panel found that the course specification is well-designed, and the content of the courses is appropriate to the Master level and degree, as well as, to the programme's mission and objectives. Moreover, as confirmed through the study of the course files provided during the site visit, there is a utilization of the scientific evidence-based teaching method in a number of courses, in addition to the use of applications and activities such as CDs and short films. The Panel appreciates that the content of the courses of the programme is appropriate - in general - to the scientific degree of the programme in terms of breadth. The Panel advises the College to further review the depth of these courses. The Panel also noted that there is inconsistency in the programme objectives in the SER and the courses' specification form. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should review the courses' specification, to ensure its currency and accuracy. The SER indicates that an informal benchmarking has been conducted for the programme against two regional programmes. This benchmarking covered the number of credit hours, syllabi and professional requirements. By examining the two programmes involved in the benchmarking process, the Panel noted that these programmes are specialized in the field of psychological and educational counseling. The content and objectives of the Master in Psychological Counseling programme of UoB, on the other

hand, are more centered on qualifying the student to have a Master degree in the field of psychology rather than in the field of educational counseling. Hence, the Panel urges the College to review the mechanisms of selecting programmes involved in the benchmarking process (see paragraph: 3.2).

1.4   The programme has (12) written required learning outcomes, identifying knowledge and skills related to the discipline, as well as, critical thinking skills, and general transferable skills, which are expected to be achieved by the graduate of the programme, and these outcomes have been properly mapped to the programme objectives as well as the educational objectives of the University. However, the Panel noted that a number of these outcomes such as: 'developing educational tests that are not affected by the culture', and 'developing and extracting standards of educational tests', are considered more relevant to the Master programme in Measurement and Evaluation -offered by the Psychology Department - than to the Master programme in Psychological Counseling. In this context, the Panel advises the College to review the PILOs, to reduce its overlap with those of the Master programme in Measurement and Evaluation, for directing the programme to focus on fields of psychological counseling and achieve a higher level of the graduates' proficiency. Nevertheless, the Panel appreciates - in general - that the PILOs are properly stipulated, and covering all aspects of knowledge, specific skills, critical thinking, and general transferable skills, which are generally suitable for the programme.

1.5   The SER indicates that there are clear PILOs related to the CILOs, and it states that the Master in Psychological Counseling programme depends on the directions of the QAAC to achieve that. Through the provided evidence, the Panel notes that the CILOs are stipulated in the course specification and are mapped to the PILOs, but the CILOs still need to be reviewed, to ensure its accuracy and the alignment with the course level. Furthermore, there is a matrix outlining the mapping of CILOs to the PILOs, through which the Panel found that the two outcomes 'building diagnostic tools and preparing psychological reports', and 'acquiring scientific research skills' are not linked with more than one course. The Panel also found that the master thesis has not been included in this matrix. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should review and revise the CILOs to be more compatible with the level of the courses, as well as, the matrix of mapping CILOs to PILOs, in order to ensure that all learning outcomes required for the programme are properly reflected in the learning outcomes required for courses.

1.6   UoB has a student-centered philosophy in terms of teaching and learning strategy that ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and objectives of the academic programmes, through the teaching and learning process, which is based on a variety of teaching and learning methods, as shown on the university's website, and in its formal policy. From the interviews conducted with students and faculty members

during the site visit, it was revealed to the Panel that the programme relies on practical applied activities in a number of courses alongside conventional teaching methods such as lectures, which lessen the limitation of the programme in terms of lacking a work-based component. Furthermore, the programme uses practical applications such as the case study or diagnosis, and counseling sessions, which are used as practical teaching approaches. In addition, the programme uses the interpretation or analysis approach for cases that are subject to practical study in different institutions of the society such as hospitals for mental health, juvenile centres, disability centres, schools and families with special circumstances. The courses' specification clarifies how the CILOs are mapped to the teaching and learning methods, to ensure the contribution of these methods to achieving these outcomes. Moreover, faculty members confirmed their use of computer software in teaching some courses such as: 'SPSS', in addition to other software that are available in the laboratory of the Psychology Department and serving topics of the programme. From interviewing students and graduates, the Panel concluded that there is general satisfaction with the teaching and learning methods used in the programme. They also emphasized that the practical activities are adequate, and contribute to raising the level of their efficiency and ability to apply theoretical information, and encouraging self-learning. Thus, the Panel appreciates that there is a variety of teaching and learning methods in the programme, which are appropriate to the practical nature of the programme and contribute to the achievement of its Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs), in addition to encouraging students to participate in the learning process and developing self- learning skills. Although, the e-learning is defined in the UoB teaching and learning strategy, and in spite of the existence of an e-learning platform, during the tour in the computer laboratory and from interviews with the faculty members and students, the Panel found that e-learning is not effectively implemented in the programme. The e-learning platform has been often used in a few courses as a means of saving the study material. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should apply procedures that contribute to using the e-learning properly, according to the teaching and learning policy of the University, and measure the effectiveness of these procedures in the achievement of the PILOs.

1.7   The assessment policy adopted by the University and approved by its Council (Decision number 545/2015), states the need to use various assessment tools, as the utilized assessment approaches must achieve in a clear manner the functions of both formative and summative assessments, as well as, the learning outcomes that are intended to be measured. Moreover, students are informed -through the course specification distributed to them at the beginning of the semester- about the assessment tools used in the course and their proportions of the course final grade. Furthermore, interviewed students emphasized, during the site visit, that faculty members have adhered to what is incorporated in the courses specification. They also expressed their satisfaction with the fairness of the assessment, and indicated that they

can review their work and their assessed examination papers, as well as, their grades with the course instructor during the semester. The student also has the right to submit an appeal to the Admission and Registration Department, if he/she wants to object about a certain given grade. The appeal can be implemented after the end of the semester, according to specific and regulated procedures. Furthermore, the interviewed students indicated during the site visit that they receive an oral feedback when discussing their corrected examination papers and that there is a sufficient degree of accuracy and justice in this area. Moreover, during interviews the Panel confirmed that students and faculty members are aware of the assessment policies and procedures, which are available on the university website and in the student manual. Faculty members are also informed about any adjustments in the university policy related to the assessments through department meetings and the instructions of the university administration in this regard. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies for the assessment of students achievement that are suitable for the Master in Psychological Counseling programme, and both the academic members and the students are aware of these policies. However, the Panel noted the lack of commitment to applying the university policy of verifying the academic plagiarism in all students' work. Thus, the Panel urges the College to ensure applying the university policies and procedures related to verifying the academic plagiarism in the programme properly, to ensure the achievement of the programme objectives (see recommendation in the paragraph: 3.3).

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

- The programme has defined objectives that are relevant to the mission and the vision of both the College and the University, and are compatible with the nature of the discipline and the scientific level of the qualification.
- The study plan of the programme provides an appropriate sequence of knowledge and required skills, which allows semester-by-semester progression, and the study workload is appropriate.
- The content of the courses of the programme is appropriate -in general- to the scientific degree of the programme in terms of breadth.
- There are intended learning outcomes for the programme that are properly stipulated, and covering all aspects of knowledge, specific skills, critical thinking, and general transferable skills, which are generally suitable for the programme.
- There are various methods for teaching and learning, which are appropriate to the practical nature of programme and contribute to the achievement of its intended learning outcomes, in addition to encouraging students to participate in the learning process and develop self - learning skills.

- There are clear policies for the assessment of students' achievement that are suitable for the Master in Psychological Counseling programme, and both the academic members and the students are aware of these policies.

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

- increase the practical content of the programme curriculum, to ensure achieving a better balance between theory and practice, and study the possibility of incorporating elective courses in the curriculum to enable the student to develop his/her knowledge and skills in specific trends of Psychological Counseling
- review the courses specification to ensure its currency and accuracy
- review and revise the course intended learning outcomes to be more compatible with the level of the courses, as well as, the matrix of mapping the course intended learning outcomes to the program intended learning outcomes, in order to ensure that all learning outcomes required for the programme are properly reflected in the learning outcomes required for courses
- apply the procedures that contribute to using the e-learning properly, according to the teaching and learning strategy of the University and assess the effectiveness of these procedures in the achievement of programme intended learning outcomes.

1.10   **Judgement**

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

2 Indicator 2: Efficiency of the Programme

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

2.1 The programme has a clear admission policy that follows the university admission regulations, and it is stipulated clearly in the graduate studies regulation. Based on this policy, students who hold a bachelor's degree in the disciplines of Psychology and Education are accepted directly in the programme of Master in Psychological Counseling, while bachelor's degree-students from other disciplines are accepted on the condition of studying three remedial courses firstly. These courses are: 'Introduction to Psychology' (PSYC103), 'Social Psychology' (PSYC290), and 'Childhood and Adolescence' (PSYC 221). Moreover, it is required for the admission to the programme that the student takes English language examination, as well as, the aptitude examination and the personal interview, to ensure the success and retention of students admitted to the programme. In addition, the admission procedures are announced *via* the university website and the published booklets of both the College and the University. The Panel considers that this admission policy is generally appropriate, and compatible with what is accustomed in such programmes offered by other universities. However, by examining the evidence, the Panel found that there are no special formal or common rating scales for the personal interview that can be used to compare between applicants of the programme. The Panel also noted that the aptitude test measures the knowledge of the applicants mainly without measuring their professional preparations. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College, in coordination with the University, should develop clear conditions and standards for admission and clear rating scales, to ensure transparency and fairness in comparing among applicants who will be admitted to the programme.

2.2 The SER indicates that students are admitted to the programme based on their profiles, which meet the requirements of admission in the programme including the relevance of the bachelor degree to the Master in Psychological Counseling programme or passing remedial courses, if the applicant does not hold bachelor degree in the required specialization. In addition to passing the personal interview, applicants must pass the written test prepared by the Department, and if the applicant does not have the minimum required level of competency in English, he/she has to register in two remedial courses of English language. It was revealed to the Panel through examining the files of the remedial courses, that the content of the 'Introduction to Psychology' (PSYC103) course gives the student the basic concepts before studying for the Master programme. As for the 'Social Psychology' (PSYC290) and 'Childhood and Adolescence' (PSYC 221) remedial courses, the Panel advises the College to review the content of these two courses to ensure the development of the knowledge and skills of the students in line with the requirements of the programme in these two areas.

Furthermore, the Panel was provided with a study conducted by the College on a sample of students who were directly admitted to the programme, to compare their scores in the Bachelor degree with their scores when they graduated from the Master in Psychological Counseling programme. It indicates that there is a positive correlation between their scores in the two degrees, and that the admission requirements are appropriate to the needs of the programme. Moreover, the Panel noted that there is a lack in regular admission for student cohorts to the programme. As indicated by the programme managers, admission to the programme is not opened unless the Ministry of Education sends five students to study in the programme, and if the Ministry does not send them, the admission is suspended in this year, which adversely affects the educational process, and the ability of the programme to continue and develop. Therefore, the Panel advises the College - in collaboration with the University - to study the possibility of opening the programme without having students sent by the Ministry of Education as a condition and to develop the programme marketing in order to attract students from Arab Gulf countries, as well as, other Arab countries.

2.3 According to the presented evidence, there is an appropriate organizational structure for the programme management, as the programme coordinator is assigned with defined tasks, and he/she follows the Head of the Psychology Department in the management hierarchy, who in turn follows the Dean. There is also an appropriate organizational, administrative, and academic structure, in addition to a specific deanship for graduate studies at the university level, which supervises the organization and coordination of postgraduate studies affairs at the university and college levels. At the department level, there are several committees that carry out various tasks concerning the academic affairs of the programme, which in turn, forward their recommendations to the Department Council, and then the College Council and finally to the University Council, upon request. The programme coordinator also works continuously with the Head of the Department (HoD), advisory councils, sub-committees and others to facilitate applying the administrative system of the academic programmes in the University. Furthermore, there is a clear description of responsibilities and duties, and the Panel was informed, during the site visit interviews that both the staff and the students are aware of it. Therefore, the Panel appreciates that there is a clear and appropriate organizational structure for the programme management.

2.4 There are eight faculty members contributing to the programme; seven of them holds a doctorate degree, of whom there are (2) professors and (5) associate professors, in addition to one research and teaching assistant. Given the limited number of admitted students in the programme (32 students), the students to faculty members ratio is appropriate. The academic member performs his/her role in the programme through teaching, scientific research and community service. Moreover, faculty members provide students with academic advising and supervise research and master theses,

besides their membership in a number of academic committees and community service committees. The academic workload of faculty members is in line with the systems and regulations, applied at the University, and their profiles indicate that some of them have professional experience relevant to the practical aspects of the programme. Furthermore, the Panel noted that they conducted a number of studies and research, which enabled them to be promoted to the ranks of professor and associate professor. The Panel appreciates that the profiles of the academic members indicate that they have appropriate practical experience and research output, and that the students to faculty members ratio is appropriate and allowing interaction between the student and the academic member during his/her supervision of the thesis. However, through the provided evidence about the academic workload of faculty members, and during the interviews with faculty members and students, the Panel noted that some faculty members in the Department of Psychology contribute to teaching courses of the programme that are not completely compatible with their specializations. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should consider the specialization of the faculty member when he/she is assigned with teaching courses of the programme.

2.5   UoB has official published procedures for the recruitment, appraisal, and promotion of its faculty members, which are implemented in the programme in a transparent manner, and faculty members are aware of these procedures. The recruitment processes follow specific procedures beginning with advertising job vacancies on the university website, then studying applications forwarded by the Department to the College, and then to the University. After that, they compare between the candidates, and the faculty member is appointed according to vacant posts. The faculty members that the Panel interviewed during the site visit confirmed that recruitment procedures were carried out in a consistent and transparent manner. The Regulation of Faculty Members explains their rights and duties, as well as, methods of appraisal and promotion. There is also a system to evaluate the performance of the faculty member that is filled up electronically and regularly by the students. The HoD also evaluates faculty members based on several aspects: the academic activity, the teaching performance, their relationships with their colleagues, their cooperation with the HoD, as well as their research and scientific activity, alongside services provided by them to the university and the community. Moreover, the provided evidence and interviews with faculty members confirmed that there is an appropriate retention rate among faculty members in general, and in most cases faculty members ended their work at the University due to their desire for retirement, or the expiration of the contract. During the site visit, the interviewed faculty members expressed their satisfaction with the current working conditions, which help in their retention. The University also has the Academic Promotion System for promoting academic staff, including the criteria for establishing the committees of academic promotion at the department, college, and university levels, alongside the mechanisms of these committees, and the

requirements and standards of academic promotion. The evidence refers to promoting four faculty members during the last five years. The Panel appreciates that there are clear transparent procedures related to the recruitment process, and the academic appraisal, in addition to evidence of promoting a number of faculty members over the last five years. With regard to introducing the new academics to the University, its system, services, and resources, the Panel was informed, during interviews with faculty members, that this activity is implemented at the department and the college levels but in an informal manner. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should organize a formal induction programme for new academics at the department, college, and university levels to introduce them to the university policies, regulations, resources, and various services, and assess the effectiveness of the induction programme.

2.6   UoB has a modern Management Information System (MIS) that includes the online registration system, academic advising, timetables, and human resources. These systems are compatible with the programme objectives and type. During the site visit and from the provided evidence, it became clear to the Panel that the academic and administrative staff have online access to information regarding salary slips, attendance reports, overtime hours of administrative staff, and other needs of administrative and academic staff. These online services are also available for the students to register their courses and pay tuition. There is also an available access to the records of the enrolled students in the programme, their timetables, and the name of the academic advisor assigned for each student. In addition, interviews with faculty members revealed the availability of recording absence and monitoring grades online. Furthermore, the E-learning Centre provides reports about the benefit of its services for the academic departments, and the library provides reports about the available resources for the College and its use. Despite the availability of an MIS that is aligned with the programme objectives and type, it is used on a limited basis in the management of the programme, students, and various resources. The Panel did not find any evidence of using the MIS to enhance the decision - making process in a holistic and strategic manner. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the MIS is adequate and suitable for the programme objectives and needs; yet the Panel is of the view that it can be more useful by developing it. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to expand the utilization of the MIS in order to enhance the decision-making process at the strategic level of the programme.

2.7   UoB has clear policies and procedures that are in place to ensure the security and safety of all the records and information of students in the College, in addition to procedures and policies for risk management. There is an information server at the university campus, as well as another one outside the University, with replicas of data and information stored on the main server, to ensure that it is not damaged for any reason. Moreover, the access to students' data is only allowed to the authorized people

according to specific procedures to ensure the confidentiality and security of information. There are also gradual authorizations for each faculty member to access students' data. In regard to the process of entering grades, it is assigned only to the course instructor and approved by the HoD. The Panel appreciates that there are policies and procedures that are applied in the programme to ensure the integrity of information of the programme's students, and to maintain its security and accuracy.

2.8   During the site visit tour of the University and the College, the Panel learned that the Master in Psychological Counseling programme uses classrooms in the building of the College of Physical Education to offer its courses. The Panel noted that these classrooms are suitable for this purpose. Moreover, the University provides places for the students inside the campus such as sports halls, besides several spaces available for students to practice their activities (e.g. the club of arts and music, theatre, chess, media, the cinema of arts, gym, wellness centre, and offices for the students' council). There is also an available (Wi-Fi) service at the College of Arts and the laboratories, as well as, providing emails to students and faculty members, in addition to sufficient individual offices for the academic members, equipped with computers, and adequate for work and meeting students. Moreover, there are online systems (Blackboard & Moodle) provided by Zain E-learning Centre and enabling instructors to present some parts of their courses online, although the use of these systems are limited in the programme. In addition, a room for muscle relaxation is provided with a chair dedicated to it, besides two rooms separated by a single direction mirror, which is used to train students for interviews and to apply tests. However, during the site visit interviews, graduates of the programme indicated that faculty members have not used these rooms. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure using the available learning resources more effectively in the programme. During the tour in the library, the Panel found that it is provided with books, references and proper electronic resources that serve both the students and the programme faculty members. In addition, the library provides three electronic modern databases, which are adequate and accessible by students and faculty members. It also provides classrooms, supportive services, and study halls for groups. During interviews, students and staff members expressed their satisfaction with the available facilities and services that support the programme. Thus, the Panel appreciates that the available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs, in addition to the availability of printed and soft copies of books and references that meet the needs of both students and faculty members.

2.9   UoB has a tracking system to track the use of its different resources; the Panel observed during the site visit that the timetables for the use of classrooms and laboratories are generated by the Deanship of Admission and Registration and are posted at the doors, and any request to change these timetables is implemented by the Deanship. Zain E-learning Centre provides a platform for e-learning courses incorporated within the e-

learning system, where the system collects data about the use of its resources and generates several reports on the size and forms of usage. Moreover, the library has a rigorous system to monitor and track its operations. The Panel also learned, during the site visit interviews that it is possible to generate reports for the Department and the College about students, tracking their academic affairs, and the usage of the provided services by the programme. The provided evidence and site visit interviews indicate that the services are used in different intensities; while there is an adequate use of the databases available in the main library of the University by students and faculty members, the programme uses the e-learning platform in a very limited manner. The Panel acknowledges that there are tracking systems to evaluate the utilization of different resources, but no evidence was provided on using them by the programme management to inform decision making regularly and periodically. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should further utilize the tracking reports and the updated data of the tracking systems in enhancing decision making that contributes to improving the educational process.

2.10   UoB has several administrative bodies of supportive nature serving the academic process, which assist in providing students with support to facilitate their learning. The University has a written handbook for the induction purpose, including regulations and instructions that must be followed and adhered to by the students. Furthermore, during the site visit and from the provided evidence, the Panel was informed that there is an appropriate support provided for the students in laboratories, the library, and e-learning whether through the infrastructure or available computer applications, in addition to interpersonal support such as the assistance provided by laboratory technicians or specialists in the Library. As for the academic advising, there is a system to help students in choosing the appropriate subjects for them. In addition to several supports that are provided to students who have special needs such as helping them in courses registration and providing them with equipped car, as well as support services provided by volunteer students. The library also provides special services for them by providing a room for visual disabilities with a computer especially equipped for these cases. The Career Guidance Office of the Vice President for Community and Graduate Services prepares the students for the challenges of the labour market by providing them with several services such as the Career Day, CV pickup and delivery service, job nominations service and on campus employment. Moreover, the Department of Advice and Guidance of the Deanship of Student Affairs guides and advises students through specialized social workers. It was revealed during interviews with students, that they are satisfied with the different support services provided to them. The Panel reviewed the satisfaction surveys of the expected graduates and noted the lack of evidence on the use of these surveys in improving different services provided to students to support them. The Panel appreciates the various support services provided by University to the students, and urges the University to expand the distribution of the

satisfaction surveys to include all undergraduate students, and to make use of the results in improving the available support in the programme in a periodic and regular manner.

2.11   The University has an induction programme for the newly enrolled students, which is organized by the Deanship of Students Affairs. During the Induction Day, students are prepared to be involved in the University to facilitate their adaptation, and are provided with needed data and information about the University. They are also provided with a written booklet that includes the rights and duties of UoB students, and a handbook that includes instructions for the new students in the College of Arts. The Deanship of Graduate Studies participated in the Induction Day by providing students with a special booklet that contains information about the regulations, the way to register in the courses, the procedures related to the master thesis and other relevant information. During interviews, faculty members indicated that all information about introducing the programme are available on the website for any student who could not attend the induction programme. During interviews, students expressed their satisfaction with the Induction Day and its effectiveness. However, the Panel was not provided with any evidence indicating that those in charged with the induction programme had measured the extent to which students are satisfied with the programme. The Panel appreciates the arrangements taken by the University management to introduce the newly admitted student to the programme and the provided services and activities. The Panel also advises the College to evaluate students' satisfaction with the induction day in a systematic manner and utilize the results in enhancing the induction programme.

2.12   UoB has an academic advising system, which is detailed in the handbook of the academic staff members, stating that the HoD should appoint an academic advisor for each student enrolled in the programme, and inform the Deanship of Admission and Registration to add the name of the academic advisor to the student's electronic page. The academic advisor works according to a stated policy, as he/she submits an annual report to the HoD about the core problems, which will be presented to the Department Council and the University Council, upon request. As per chapter (9) of the Study Regulations for Postgraduate Students, the student receives an academic warning if he/she did not get a minimum Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of (3.0) out of (4.0). The student will also be dismissed from the University, if he/she did not reach the minimum required CGPA in the two semesters subsequent to receiving the academic warning. The academic advising system is supposed to monitor the at-risk students who received an academic warning, as he/ she meets the academic advisor to help and give him/her the appropriate advices to raise his/her CGPA. Moreover, the Panel found that there is an academic support available for the students who are poor in the English language *via* the National Geographic Centre, which has been recently opened at the University. However, no evidence was presented to the Panel indicating

to the effectiveness of these mechanisms in addressing cases of academic failure. Accordingly, the Panel acknowledges that there are mechanisms for academic advising, and advises the College to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of these mechanisms, and their contribution to improving the academic performance of the student.

2.13 UoB provides various opportunities to expand the knowledge and experience of the students, through supporting activities, including participation in the student activities, in cooperation with college associations and clubs, and student exhibitions. Interviewed students expressed their satisfaction during the site visit and it was clear to the Panel that students are allowed to participate in a wide range of informal learning activities organized by different entities at the University. These activities include cultural and social activities, sports events, seminars, various workshops, the Career Day, and peer-teaching programme. Moreover, the organizational professional skills of students are enhanced through accomplishing the master thesis, and bringing external examiners for the *viva*. During interview sessions, students expressed their satisfaction towards the opportunities offered by the University and the College to expand their learning experience. The Panel appreciates that there is a learning environment in the College contributing to expanding the knowledge and learning experience of students, which supports informal learning activities.

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

- There is a clear and appropriate organizational structure for the programme management.
- The profiles of the academic members indicate that they have appropriate practical experience and research output, and that the students to faculty members ratio is appropriate and allowing interaction between the student and the academic member during his/her supervision of the thesis.
- The University has clear transparent procedures for the recruitment and appraisal of faculty members, and there is evidence of promoting a number of academic members during the last five years.
- The Management Information System is adequate and suitable for the programme objectives and needs.
- There are policies and procedures that are applied in the programme to ensure the integrity of information of the programme's students, and to maintain its security and accuracy.
- The available resources of the programme are adequate for its needs, in addition to providing printed and soft copies of books and references to meet the needs of both students and faculty members.
- There are various support services provided by the University to the students, which are suitable for their needs.

- There are arrangements taken by the university management to introduce new students to the programme, services, and the provided activities.
- There is a learning environment in the College contributing to expanding the knowledge and learning experience of students, which supports informal learning activities.

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

- coordinate with the University, in developing clear conditions and standards for admission, as well as, clear rating scales to ensure transparency and fairness in comparing among applicants who will be admitted to the programme
- consider the specialization of the faculty member when he/she is assigned with teaching courses of the programme
- organize a formal induction programme for new academics at the department, college, and university levels to introduce them to the university policies, regulations, resources, and various services, and assess the effectiveness of the induction programme
- ensure using the available learning resources more effectively in the programme
- further utilize the tracking reports and the updated data of the tracking systems in enhancing decision making that contributes to improving the educational process.

2.16 **Judgement**

On balance, the Panel concludes that the programme **satisfies** the Indicator on **Efficiency of the Programme.**

3   Indicator 3: Academic Standards of the Graduates

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

3.1   UoB developed ILOs at the University level including: communication skills, skills of information technology, skills of analytical and critical thinking, professional and moral responsibility, and continuous self-learning. As per the SER, there are clear attributes for the graduates of the programme outlined within its educational outcomes and objectives, which have been mapped to the ILOs of the University, in addition to mapping the CILOs to the programme ILOs and objectives, whose achievement can be measured by using different assessment methods. However, the Panel observed the inaccuracy of some of these outcomes and its inconsistent documentation. The Panel urges the College to address this matter (see paragraphs: 1.4 and 1.5). Nevertheless, the Panel noted that, the CILOs mentioned in the SER are generally reflecting the required attributes of the graduates, as well as, covering the discipline knowledge and skills, in addition to critical thinking skills, and general transferable skills. By reviewing the courses outline, it was revealed that the ILOs are written in sentences that can be often measured and represent the main indicators of performance in each course. Furthermore, the Panel noted, during the site visit interviews with the students, faculty members, and employers, that there is a common understanding of what is expected from the programme and the outcomes that it seeks to achieve. The Panel appreciates that there is an appropriate level of common understanding of the required attributes of the graduates, which are reflected in the CILOs.

3.2   UoB has a formal benchmarking policy adopted in 2015 by the University Council, and it includes appropriate actions for conducting the benchmarking process, as well as, determining its scope of application. The SER indicates that there is an informal benchmarking conducted for the programme against two Master in psychological counseling programmes that are offered by two regional universities. This benchmarking covered the number of credit hours, syllabus, and professional requirements. By examining the two programmes involved in the benchmarking process, the Panel noted that these two programmes are specialized in the field of psychological and educational counseling, while the content and objectives of the Master in Psychological Counseling programme of UoB are more geared towards qualifying the student in the field of psychology rather than educational counseling. It was also noted that this benchmarking process has been implemented informally and it has been limited only to comparing courses title and specification, although, faculty members mentioned that they have utilized the results of this benchmarking in developing their courses content. The Panel considers that these practices of benchmarking are not consistent with the policy of UoB in this regard, as the

programme has been benchmarked with two regional programmes only and in an informal manner. The Panel was also not provided with the rationale of selecting these two programmes. The Panel was informed, during the site visit meetings with the faculty members and the programme managers that the benchmarking process did not include the admission requirements, the PILOs or the academic standards, and it did not benchmark in detail the assessment tools or the actual teaching and learning methods used in the programme. In addition, the Panel was not provided with evidence demonstrating how the results of these benchmarking processes have contributed to the programme development. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should implement the benchmarking policy of the University and conduct the external benchmarking in a formal and comprehensive manner, covering all aspects of the programme with other similar programmes offered by regional and international universities, in addition to utilizing its results in improving the programme.

3.3   The programme adopts the assessment policy of UoB. The students confirmed during interviews that they are aware of the updated methods of assessment through the form of course specification that is distributed to them by the course instructor. The form is discussed at the beginning of every academic semester; and it includes a description of assessment tools and methods used. The assessment results and students' course work are posted by the faculty members before the final examination. During interviews, the Panel learned that the QAAC and the Quality Assurance Office (QAO) of the College have internally moderated the course files periodically, and developed recommendations for improvement. The Panel was also informed that the Department of Psychology has formed a committee to ensure the integrity and review the final examinations before printing and distributing them to the students, but there is no evidence about the work of this committee. Moreover, the Panel noted that the plagiarism policy is not applied in all the students' works. Thus, the Panel recommends the College should ensure that the university policies and procedures related to the detection of academic plagiarism are applied properly in the programme to ensure the attainment of its objectives. Moreover, the Panel found that the moderation system for examinations and student assessment is not applied effectively in the programme. The provided evidence indicates that the issues related to the assessment, which have been monitored by the QAAC of the University, have not been addressed. In addition, the Panel noted through verifying the course files the lack of compliance with the specifications of the examination paper, alongside typographical and linguistic errors that have not been monitored by the mechanisms followed in the programme. The Panel urges the College to address this matter (see paragraphs: 3.5 and 3.6).

3.4   The SER indicates that the Department implement certain mechanisms to ensure the alignment between the assessment and the CILOs, as the academic staff member

evaluates the CILOs through the CILO assessment form, and links them with the student achievements to measure the attainment of the CILOs. During interviews with the faculty members, it was revealed that they have a clear understanding of these procedures, and the Panel was also informed that these forms are incorporated in the course files. Furthermore, the interviewed faculty members indicate that the examination committee and the quality assurance committee are responsible for reviewing the assessment tools, and ensuring that these tools are properly mapped to the learning outcomes whose achievement is required to be measured. However, the Panel noted through the examination of the course files that the mid-term and the final examination questions concentrate mainly on memorizing and understanding and do not sufficiently concentrate on higher skills level of the programme, which reflects negatively on the accuracy of the results related to the measurement of the attainment of the ILOs. Hence, the Panel acknowledges that there are mechanisms to ensure the alignment between the assessment tools and the CILOs. The Panel also recommends that the College should evaluate the effectiveness of the utilized mechanisms in the programme to ensure the compatibility of the assessment tools with the CILOs.

3.5   UOB has a moderation system for examinations and students assessment, including specific moderation requirements, including pre-moderation and post-moderation of examinations that focuses on the moderation of course grades. As indicated in the SER and the provided evidence, the Department of Psychology has formed a committee to ensure the integrity of the final examinations and review them before being printed and distributed to students. However, there is no evidence provided about the activation of this committee. Moreover, the Panel found - through reviewing the course files - evidence confirming the ineffectiveness of the internal pre-moderation process in ensuring the quality of the assessment tools. The Panel found that in several courses, there is a lack of commitment to the specifications of the examination paper, typographical and linguistic errors, and the midterm and final examinations are limited to multiple-choices, matching, true or false and open-ended questions, that require limited writing and focus on measuring outcomes related to memorizing and understanding rather than the other outcomes. Furthermore, the Panel observed the lack of detailed assessment rubrics for the students' assignments, and the lack of evidence on providing observations by the department committee of examinations' verification to address all these issues. In addition, the provided evidence refers to the cooperation between the QAAC and the QAO of the College in reviewing the course files, to ensure the alignment between the level of the examination questions and the CILOs. However, this moderation process has been conducted after the assessment process and not before it, and it has not been conducted by specialized instructors, in addition to not providing adequate evidences on addressing recommendations mentioned in the audit report of the programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should activate the university procedures related to the internal

moderation of assessment tools at the programme level, assess its effectiveness, and conduct the internal moderation process by specialized professors.

3.6   UoB has a moderation policy for examinations and student assessments; it was approved by the University Council in 2015, and includes the requirements of the internal and external moderations and mechanisms of pre - and post - moderations of examinations. Although article (9) of the university regulation concerning the moderation of examinations and student assessments requires external moderation for examinations, as well as, student assessments in the undergraduate and postgraduates academic programmes, but it has not been put into practice. The Panel learned from the provided evidence and interviews with the faculty members that the formal procedures for external moderation of assessments have not been applied in the Master in Psychological Counseling programme. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should implement formal procedures that are suitable for the external moderation of the assessment, where feedback from external moderation contributes to programme development and course improvements.

3.7   The Panel examined the course files, which include course specifications, examination model answers, grade sheets, and samples of students' works and theses. The Panel noted that the CILOs have been assessed by a set of appropriate assignments that are given to students. However, the midterm and final examinations in a number of courses mainly include multiple choices, matching, true and false, and open-ended questions, which do not require significant writing. This limits the ability of these examinations to provide evidence reflecting whether the level of the students' work is consistent with the type and level of the programme. Furthermore, the Panel noted that the level of students' achievement is not often compatible with the granted grades, as there are no clear assessment rubrics provided for assessing most of the student works. The distribution of marks is limited to the availability of general criteria such as the introduction and the content without outlining specifications for these criteria, which often leads to grade inflation, or higher success rates that are not compatible with the level of students' work. In addition, the policy of verifying academic plagiarism is not consistently implemented, which does not enable the Panel to confirm that the students' works reflect their actual level. Moreover, some master theses were not up to the expected level, as these theses were limited to displaying the conclusion of research findings without incorporating a chapter for discussing these findings. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should review the distribution of grades in different courses, to ensure that grades reflect the actual level of the student, and that the level of students work including the master thesis is appropriate to the programme level, and its learning outcomes.

3.8   The SER indicates that the programme measures the graduates' level of achievements in direct and indirect ways. As for the direct way, it is conducted through the course

assessment form, which is subsequently used in measuring the achievement of the PILOs. However, there are some deficiencies in the mapping of the assessment tools to the ILOs (see paragraph: 3.4), in addition to the ineffectiveness of the internal moderation process (see paragraph: 3.5), as well as, the lack of external moderation for the programme (see paragraph: 3.4), which affect the reliability of the results. Furthermore, the programme verifies the graduate achievements indirectly through satisfaction surveys of employers and graduates, in addition to displaying the survey results and discussing them in the department meetings, as well as, in the advisory council of the programme. Despite of the low level of responses to these surveys, and the limited benefit gained from them, the Panel found during interviews that the academic staff and employers have a general level of satisfaction with the graduate achievements. They also stressed the need to strengthening the practical aspects of the programme, and increasing the confidence of the graduate in his/her capabilities. Thus, the Panel appreciates that there are direct and indirect mechanisms to ensure the consistency of the graduate achievements with the programme objectives and outcomes, and recommends that the College should measure the effectiveness of the applied mechanisms that are used in verifying the actual level of the graduates' achievement, and how it meets the programme aims and learning outcomes.

3.9   The SER includes limited student cohorts' analysis statistics of the academic years 2013-2014 and 2015-2016. The statistics indicate that there were 94 graduates out of 133 students, who were admitted to the programme in these years; seven of them had withdrawn from the programme, and 32 students were still studying. The withdrawal rate is considered low, compared with the number of admitted students. Although the College has statistics about the admitted cohorts of the programme, the Panel was not provided with any evidence indicating that the College has conducted the analysis of these statistics to benefit from its results in developing the programme. There was not also any evidence provided by the programme about a formal tracking of the destinations of the graduates. Thus, the Panel recommends that the College should utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts to conduct a detailed analysis about these cohorts and utilize it in developing the programme.

3.10   The study plan of the programme includes six credit hours for the master thesis, that student can register for after completing all the courses of the programme. The programme follows the Postgraduate Studies System of UoB, which includes the procedures of scientific theses. Chapter (10) of this system states several requirements related to selecting the supervisors and their academic ranks, in addition to selecting topics of the theses. Chapter (11) of this system includes the criteria of selecting the members of the *viva* committee. Furthermore, there is a clear mechanism for the implementation of the procedures stipulated in the system through the committees of postgraduate studies that are established at the college and the department levels. The Panel noted that all these procedures and policies are available on the website of the

Deanship of Postgraduate Studies. Moreover, the Panel conducted interviews with students and faculty members who confirmed their awareness of these policies and procedures, as well as, their compliance to these policies when they register in the thesis, and when forming the *viva* committee. The Panel appreciates that there are clear policies and procedures for supervising the master thesis stipulating the responsibilities and duties of both the student and the supervisor, and that both faculty members and students are aware of them. By reviewing a sample of master theses, the Panel found that some of them lack main parts such as dedicating a separate chapter to present and discuss the research findings, as these theses only display a summary of the results. The Panel urges the College to develop a mechanism to ensure that the level of students' work presented in the theses is appropriate to the Master degree (see paragraph 3.7). In addition, the Panel did not find evidence indicating that the detection of plagiarism within the scientific theses is applied consistently, which was confirmed during the meetings with students and alumni. The Panel urges the College to ensure that university policies and procedures, related to detecting academic plagiarism in the Master thesis, are properly applied, in order to ensure the achievement of the programme's objectives (see paragraph: 3.3).

3.11   The programme has an advisory board consisting of members representing employers and alumni, who are suitable for the membership of the board. Members of the advisory board who were interviewed during the site visit indicated that the board has written terms of reference, but it only held one meeting in May 2016, and another meeting in October 2017. The minutes of these meetings refer to the reluctance of external members to attend these meetings. Moreover, interviewed members of the advisory board referred to the lack of clear planning for the meetings, as well as, the lack of clear agenda, when inviting the members for a meeting, which is required to direct efforts toward discussing and enhancing the programme development. Most of the advisory board members have been recruited recently and attended one meeting only. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should ensure that the role of the advisory board is effective, follow a clear approach, identify topics that will be presented and reviewed by the board, and determine the mechanism to deal with the comments raised in relation to the programme.

3.12   The SER indicates that the programme intends to distribute surveys to measure the level of satisfaction of both alumni and employers with the programme and the standards of the graduates. However, the Panel met with a number of graduates and students during the site visit, who expressed their satisfaction with the programme and its outcomes in general. Additionally, they referred to the need to increase the practical aspects of the programme, in order to achieve a balance between knowledge and practice, as well as, increasing the practical skills of the graduates. They also referred to the need to raise the confidence of the students in their academic and practical competencies, to be able to practice their specialized work in the field of

psychological counseling, particularly in schools, where a number of graduates of this programme are working. The Panel urges the College to implement effective procedures to measure the satisfaction of alumni and employers with the level of the programme graduates in a periodical manner, as well as the achievement of the programme objectives and learning outcomes (see recommendation in the paragraph: 4.8).

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

- There is an appropriate level of common understanding of the required attributes of the graduates, which are reflected in the course intended learning outcomes.
- There are direct and indirect mechanisms to ensure the consistency of the graduate achievements with the programme objectives and outcomes.
- The programme has clear policies and procedures for supervising the master thesis stipulating the responsibilities and duties of both the student and the supervisor, and both faculty members and students are aware of them.

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

- implement the benchmarking policy of the University and conduct the external benchmarking in a formal and comprehensive manner, covering all aspects of the programme with other similar programmes offered by regional and international universities, in addition to utilizing its results in improving the programme
- ensure that the university policies and procedures related to the detection of academic plagiarism are applied properly in the programme to ensure the attainment of its objectives
- evaluate the effectiveness of the utilized mechanisms in the programme to ensure the compatibility of the assessment tools with the course intended learning outcomes
- activate the university procedures related to the internal moderation of assessment tools at the programme level, assess its effectiveness, and conduct the internal moderation process by specialized professors
  - implement formal procedures that are suitable for the external moderation of the assessment, where feedback from external moderation contributes to programme development and course improvements
  - review the distribution of grades in different courses, to ensure that grades reflect the actual level of the student, and that the level of students work including the master thesis is appropriate to the programme level, and its learning outcomes

- measure the effectiveness of the applied mechanisms that are used in verifying the actual level of the graduates' achievement, and how it meets the programme aims and learning outcomes
- utilize the available statistics about the student cohorts to conduct a detailed analysis about these cohorts and utilize it in developing the programme
- ensure that the role of the advisory board is effective, follow a clear approach, identify topics that will be presented and reviewed by the board, and determine the mechanism to deal with the comments raised in relation to the programme.

3.15 **Judgement**

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

4 Indicator 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

4.1 UoB has policies and institutional systems covering different academic and administrative aspects, including: examinations, students, scientific research, continuous learning, community engagement, graduates, administrative affairs, information technology, security, safety, health, faculty members, the academic promotion system, the academic advising system, scholarships, and the continuous development of faculty members. There are also policies related to quality such as the University Policy for Quality Assurance, the Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy of Programmes, the Benchmarking Policy, and the System of Offering the Academic Programmes and Courses, etc. The Panel is of the view that these policies and systems meet the programme needs. They are available on the official website of the University for all academic members, who indicated during interviews that they are aware of these policies *via* different channels including newsletters of the university management. Moreover, faculty members express their views about those policies through the official councils. UoB ensures the implementation of these policies and systems through the following structure: QAAC at the university level, quality assurance offices at the college level, alongside the quality assurance committee consisting of some faculty members. The college deans, as well as the department heads, participate in applying these policies and systems at the programme level. Furthermore, senior management stated that these policies are subject to periodical review every five years, and some faculty members participate in this review, as well as quality assurance officials at the university, colleges and departments levels, as per the System of Suggestion, Review and Development of Policies. With respect to reviewing the policies and regulations of postgraduate programmes, the Panel learned that it is done through the postgraduate studies committee at the department level, which raises its suggestions to the Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally to the University Council. Consequently, the Panel appreciates that the documented policies and institutional systems are in place to meet the programme needs, and faculty members are well informed about these policies. However, the Panel observed that the implementation of some policies is not achieved as required, such as the policy of teaching workload, moderation, plagiarism, benchmarking, communication with alumni, advisory councils, and others (as mentioned in some paragraphs of this Report). The Panel urges the College to ensure the implementation of university policies consistently on the programme level, as indicated in different paragraphs of this Report.

4.2 The decree-law of establishing and organizing the UoB regulates the management of the academic programmes at the University. According to the SER, the Master in Psychological Counseling programme is managed by the Department of Psychology of the College of Arts. There is a number of programme committees such as the postgraduate studies committee, the committee of scientific research, conferences and academic development, the culture committee, the quality assurance committee, and the academic promotion committee. These committees have meetings over different periods as per the work requirements, and raise their recommendations to the HoD, who in turn takes the necessary actions, and forwards those recommendations to the university management *via* communication channels with the Dean of the College, or takes the appropriate action within the Department. As per the interviews conducted by the Panel, the academic responsibility of the programme is assigned to the HoD in collaboration with the faculty members and the programme coordinator. The Department Council takes into account the compatibility of its decisions and recommendations with the university rules and regulations. The Deanship of Postgraduate Studies and Scientific Research of the University monitors the implementation of the systems and regulations of the postgraduate studies; and there are clear lines of responsibilities. The guidebook of faculty members outlines the responsibilities and roles of the faculty members, the Dean, and the President of the University. Accordingly, the Panel acknowledges that there is a responsible leadership for the programme management.

4.3 There are clear policies and procedures of quality assurance at the university, college, and department levels. The QAAC of the University tracks the work of the quality assurance units of the colleges, and the QAO of the College - related directly to the Dean of the College - monitors the quality system in the programmes, in addition to the QAC at the department level that includes the programme coordinators. The Panel considers that this committee is adequate to meet the needs of the quality system in the programme. Hence, the Panel appreciates that there are formal policies and procedures that are appropriate to the quality assurance at the university and college levels. The faculty members of the programme mentioned during interviews that they participate in the quality assurance activities organized by the QAO of the College, and indicated that they introduced some improvement in the programme, such as putting the course assessment form into practice. The QAAC has also formed a committee to implement an audit process for the academic programmes of the College of Arts in 2016. It also provides a quality manual that clearly stipulates the related policies and procedures, in addition to, the roles and responsibilities of the relevant stakeholders. However, the provided evidence indicates the inconsistency in applying policies and quality assurance mechanisms in the programme and in spite of using the course assessment forms in most courses, there are files that do not include these forms. This in addition to the comments made by the Panel in different parts of this Report about benchmarking and moderation, alongside what was mentioned in the

report of the academic audit generated by the College in June 2016. Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should improve the used mechanisms to monitor and assess the management system of quality assurance in the programme and measure its effectiveness.

4.4 In general, faculty members attend training courses and workshops that strengthen their awareness of the quality concept, and build their capabilities to achieve the quality requirements in the academic programmes, in addition to forming the quality culture, and enhancing the understanding of faculty members of the quality assurance system. During the interviews with the director of QAAC of the University, the director of QAO of the College, and faculty members, they all confirmed that faculty members have full-awareness of policies and procedures adopted by the university management, the College, and the Department. Moreover, the Panel confirmed through the interviews with the faculty members that they have an understanding and awareness of their roles in the quality assurance. However, by reviewing the course files, the Panel found that the quality concept is not effectively reflected in the work of faculty members, as they have often focused on achieving requirements of the quality system of the UoB in terms of form rather than substance. Thus, the Panel appreciates that both the academic and the administrative staff are aware of the quality mechanisms and requirements, as well as, the efforts of the programme management to disseminate the quality culture among them. The Panel also advises the College to continue embedding this culture, to become a routine self-practice, which ensures a high level of achievement of the programme content and outcomes.

4.5 UoB has the System of Offering and Developing Academic Programmes and Courses, which was approved in 2013, and is available on its website. The system includes a description of how to offer and develop the academic programmes and courses, and how to stop or suspend them; there are also forms for all the functions of this system. The Panel reviewed this system and found, after a precise examination, that developing a new programme or improving a running programme must take into account the needs of the labour market, which is represented in public and private institutions and professional associations, in addition to surveying opinions of the stakeholders such as the expected students or others. The decision-making mechanism ranges, according to this system, from the Department Council, then to the College Council, and finally the University Council. The Panel is satisfied that the University has a documented policy that is suitable for developing and offering new academic programmes.

4.6 The SER indicates that the management of the Master programme in Psychological Counseling has reviewed and improved the programme according to the policies and procedures of the UoB for the quality assurance and enhancement of the programme. These procedures require the Department to evaluate the programme, and present an

SER to the QAAC of the University. This report includes the evaluation of students' achievement and the learning objectives of the programme, in addition to utilizing the feedback of the stakeholders after analysing it, preparing an improvement plan, and monitoring its implementation. However, there is no evidence of conducting the annual assessment for the programme in a regular manner, as the evidence indicates that the QAAC conducted an academic audit of the programme in 2016. Subsequently, the programme submitted an improvement plan and the QAAC conducted one review for monitoring its implementation, which indicated that the plan was not fully implemented. Furthermore, there is no provided evidence to indicate that the programme continuously utilizes the feedback of students, alumni, and employers for its improvement. It was revealed to the Panel, during interviews, that the QAO of the College has moderated the course files to ensure that they contain the required information and documents, in addition to moderating the quality and strictness of the assessment tools. The QAO also provides recommendations for developing the courses' content and the assessment tools to the programme. However, the Panel is concerned about the effectiveness of this moderation (see paragraph: 3.5). Although, there is evidence of developing the programme and its courses, the Panel noted during interviews with the faculty members and the programme managers that there is a confusion between the holistic periodic review for the programme, and its on-going annual reviews. Moreover, the provided evidence and information obtained by the Panel, during the site visit interviews, indicate that the Department and the College have not adopted clear documented mechanisms in regard to conducting an annual regular review for the programme. The Department did not conduct self-evaluation for the programme from 2012 to the date of preparing the SER for this review, in addition to the lack of evidence referring to providing annual plans for the programme improvement. Hence, the Panel acknowledges the efforts of the programme managers and the faculty members in improving the programme, and advises the College to take the necessary arrangements to implement annual reviews for the programme at the department and the college levels, as well as, to enhance the mechanisms of monitoring the implementation of its improvement plans.

4.7   The Policy of Quality Assurance and Enhancement of the Programmes in the UoB stipulates that the academic programmes should be subjected to a periodical review, to ensure achievement of the learning outcomes, effectiveness of the curriculum, and utilization of the stakeholders' feedback in the review process. As per the internal Quality Assurance Manual issued by the QAAC of the University, these reviews cover the programme objectives, PILOs, CILOs, course specifications, teaching methods, and the practical training, in addition to reviewing the criteria of students admission, as well as, the regulations of studying remedial courses. Moreover, the review policy includes the surveys of students, employers, ministries, and institutions related to the programme outcomes. This manual also refers that the process of monitoring recommendations and decisions taken based on the review, which are conducted by

the QAAC in coordination with the QAO at the College. Although, in 2016 the QAAC conducted a review for the programme, and generated a report in this regard, the Panel noted that it did not cover all the programme aspects, and the feedback from external parties was very limited. In addition, there is a lack of evidence referring to the implementation of these reviews in a periodical and regular manner; and the mechanisms used in monitoring the implementation of the improvement plans are ineffective. Moreover, all members of the review panel were from the university staff, without including any external member, as stated by the UoB policy in this regard. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should implement the university policy for the periodic review of the programme comprehensively and continuously, and develop mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the implementation of improvement plans.

4.8   As stated in (paragraph: 4.6), the Policy of Quality Assurance and Enhancement of the Programmes in UoB stipulates that there are clear actions to collect and analyse opinions about the academic programmes periodically, and the QAAC of the University utilizes a number of surveys for this purpose. There are also available and effective mechanisms that are applied periodically to collect the student opinions about the courses through the e-questionnaire form filled for each course by the students at the end of the semester, which is analysed and the results are provided to the faculty members and the HoD, to assist them in improving their performance. Moreover, the QAAC surveys the opinions of the expected graduates, and analyses the survey results to measure the degree of satisfaction towards the whole educational process, however, it was noted the lack of evidence indicating the regular use of results in improving the programme. The SER also indicates that the Department intends to distribute surveys to measure the satisfaction level of alumni and employers toward the programme and the academic standards of the graduates. Moreover, the SER indicates that the programme is relying on the feedback gathered from the advisory council meetings. By reviewing minutes of its meetings, the Panel observed that the council does not meet regularly and its external members are unstable and do not adhere to attend its meetings. Therefore, the Panel recommends that the College should continue to develop its mechanisms to survey the opinions of all stakeholders, especially external ones, analyse the results on a periodical regular basis, and inform all internal and external stakeholders about these results.

4.9   The Evaluation System of the Academic Staff states that the academic staff member has to submit an annual report of his/ her achievements, to be evaluated by the HoD. The appraisal is based on the achievements outlined in the report and his/her evaluation by the students, and accordingly, the HoD develops a plan for developing and improving the performance of the academic staff member on a regular manner. The criteria of the annual appraisal include teaching, supervising the students, research and publishing, and university and community engagement. As per the SER

and interviews with faculty members, the Panel noted that the University has established the Unit of Excellence in Teaching and Leadership skills to develop the academic staff professionally. The unit offers a postgraduate programme in academic practice for new faculty members and as a part of the continuous academic development programme for senior faculty members. During interviews, the faculty members confirmed that they have benefited from these programmes, and that the Unit has measured their satisfaction at the end of each activity. Moreover, the QAAC of the University has conducted several training courses, short workshops, and lectures to embed the quality culture and improve the programme outcomes. In addition, the Centre of Academic Measurement, Evaluation, and Development of the University conducts workshops to present specialized topics related to constructing aptitude tests and evaluation methods, in addition to other introductory and professional courses in different topics. The Centre aims to utilize the best assessment approaches for assessing the student performance at the university level and the programme academic staff members have attended and participated in its training courses and workshops. The Panel appreciates the efforts of UoB in providing several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Teaching and Leadership to develop the teaching and professional practices of the new and senior faculty members. Nevertheless, the Panel observed that identifying the current needs of professional development for the faculty members is not implemented in a systematic and regular manner, and it is not linked to the formal appraisal, as per the policy of the University. Therefore, the Panel advises the College to identify the needs of professional development for the faculty members according to the results of the appraisal, and implement a mechanism to evaluate its impact on the performance of academic staff members.

4.10 The SER indicates that the college management is keen to develop the study plan of the programme, to keep up with the needs of the labour market, and this is done through visits conducted by the QAO to the employers' institutions. However, the Panel was not provided with any evidence referring to the results of these visits, and their contribution in ensuring that the programme and its outcomes are keeping up with the labour market needs. Moreover, there was no sufficient evidence provided to the Panel indicating that the College has conducted the employers' surveys regularly and continuously. In addition, these surveys do not provide information about the long-term needs of the labour market. Furthermore, the Panel did not find evidence of conducting holistic periodical studies to scope the labour market needs, in spite of their importance in improving the academic programmes, taking into account the very limited capability of this programme to attract new students for admission, and its main reliance on the scholarships of the Ministry of Education (see paragraph: 2.2). Hence, the Panel recommends that the College should conduct rigorous holistic studies to scope the short-term and long-term labour market needs, and utilize these studies in developing the programme.

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

- There are documented policies and institutional systems in place to meet the programme needs, and faculty members are well informed about these policies.
- There are formal proper policies and procedures for quality assurance at the university and the college levels.
- The academic and the administrative staff are aware of the quality mechanisms and requirements, as well as, the efforts of the programme management to disseminate the quality culture among them.
- The University provides several opportunities including the establishment of the Unit of Excellence in Teaching and Leadership to develop teaching and professional practices of the new and senior academic staff members.

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

- develop mechanisms to monitor and assess the management system of quality assurance in the programme, and measure its effectiveness
- implement the university policy of the periodic review of the programme comprehensively and continuously, and develop mechanisms for tracking and monitoring the implementation of improvement plans
- continue to develop its mechanisms to survey the opinions of all stakeholders, especially external ones, analyse the results on a periodical regular basis, and inform all internal and external stakeholders about these results
- conduct rigorous holistic studies to scope the short-term and long-term labour market needs and utilize these studies in developing the programme.

4.13   **Judgement**

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

5.   Conclusion

Taking into account the institution's own self-evaluation report, the evidence gathered from the interviews and documentation made available during the site visit, the Panel draws the following conclusion in accordance with the DHR/BQA *Programmes-within-College Reviews Handbook, 2014*:

There is limited confidence in the Master in Psychological Counseling Programme offered by the University of Bahrain.