

Directorate of Higher Education & Vocational Institutions Performance Reviews Follow-up Review Report

University College of Bahrain

Department of Business Administration

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration

Follow-up Visit Date: 22 October 2025

Review Date: 12 – 14 December 2022

F003-C3-F003

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Acronyms

AAOIFI	Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Finance Institutions
AY	Academic Year
BA	Business Administration
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
BScBA	Bachelor of Science in Business Administration
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
DHV	Directorate of Higher Education & Vocational Institutions Performance Reviews
HEC	Higher Education Council
LTARC	Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QA	Quality Assurance
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QMS	Quality Management System
UCB	University College of Bahrain

I. Introduction

The follow-up visits are part of a cycle of continuous quality assurance review and reporting on improvement conducted by the Directorate of Higher Education & Vocational Institutions Performance Reviews (DHV) of the Education & Training Quality Authority (BQA) in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The follow-up visits apply to all academic programmes that have been reviewed using the Academic Programme Reviews Framework (Cycle 2) and received a 'No Confidence' judgement.

The review of the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BScBA) programme was conducted by the DHV on 12 – 14 December 2022 and the Review Report was published on 10 October 2023. The judgement of the BScBA programme for each Standard is as follows:

Standard 1: The Learning Programme; Not Satisfied

Standard 2: Efficiency of the Programme; Not Satisfied

Standard 3: Academic Standards of Students and Graduates; Not Satisfied

Standard 4: Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance; Not Satisfied

The follow-up visit for the BScBA programme focused on assessing how the University College of Bahrain (UCB) addressed the recommendations within all the four Standards.

The follow-up process incorporated the review of the evidence presented by UCB to the DHV. The evidence base comprises the programme's improvement plan, progress report and supporting materials submitted to BQA by UCB to report on its progress to-date in addressing the recommendations stated in the programme Review Report.

For each recommendation given under the four Standards, the Panel judged whether the recommendation is 'Fully Addressed', 'Partially Addressed' or 'Not Addressed' using the Rubric in Appendix (A). Based on this, a judgement of 'Good Progress', 'Adequate Progress', or 'Inadequate Progress' is given to each Standard using the rubric in Appendix (B).

II. Standards and Indicators

Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

Recommendation 1: Develop and implement a clear programme planning framework which involves a broad range of stakeholders, to ensure that the BScBA programme remains relevant and fit for purposes.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 2: Update the BScBA Risk Register to include actual and current programme risks, and urgently deploy effective mitigation strategies to address the decline in student enrolments and recruit sufficient faculty to teach on the programme.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

UCB has an updated Institutional Risk Management Policy. The Panel reviewed the submitted Risk Register and found that it is prepared on the Business Administration (BA) Department level. Several identified risks related to the BScBA programme with mitigations were reported. For example, the risk of low number of faculty members has been reduced as noted in the Faculty Profile, and the decline in the number of student enrolments has slightly increased due to a new marketing strategy. After reviewing the BScBA Risk Register for three academic years, the Panel found that the risks that were not mitigated in an academic year were not included in the following year for follow up and closure. Moreover, effective risk mitigation strategies were not monitored and updated appropriately per academic programme. Therefore, UCB needs to ensure effective implementation of a risk register that identifies, mitigates and monitors academic risks at the programme level on continuous basis throughout academic years.

Recommendation 3: Review the number of concentrations in the programme, to maintain the feasibility and financial sustainability of the BScBA.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

To review the number of concentrations in the programme, UCB has conducted a 'Benchmarking BScBA Merge Concentrations' Report with local, regional and international universities. The Report recommends that the BScBA programme concentrations can be merged into three. However, approving the merge of concentrations requires the approval of

the Higher Education Council (HEC). UCB has started the process of granting the approvals as noted in the evidence. Thus, UCB should expedite the process of approving the merge of concentrations by adhering to all formal regulatory procedures and requirements.

Recommendation 4: Embed 'internationalization' into the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) to ensure that students achieve a global perspective upon graduating from UCB.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 5: Review the BScBA PILOs for clarity, conciseness, and coherence to ensure their attainment can be effectively assessed.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

Refer to the text under recommendation (6).

Recommendation 6: Develop appropriate PILOs for each of the BScBA concentrations.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

The Panel learned from the BScBA Progress Report that the PILOs were reviewed, discussed and approved by only the Industrial Advisory Board as noticed in the minutes of meetings. The Panel checked the revised PILOs in the updated Programme Specification and found that they are still multi-faceted, complex, and narrowly focused. PILO 5 addresses communication skills only in relation to technology, overlooking other key aspects. Additionally, PILO 6 covers teamwork, leadership, decision-making, and independent learning, making it a complex outcome that is difficult to assess in a bachelor's programme. Though, a PILO should reference a single skill or learning area so that it can be effectively measured. The BA Department has also defined separate PILOs for each of the offered concentrations reflecting skills that are specific to each concentration. However, the Panel has similar concerns regarding the concentration-level PILOs as those previously raised about the overall programme learning outcomes. Therefore, the BA Department should formally review the BScBA PILOs and the PILOs for each concentration for clarity, conciseness, and coherence to ensure their attainment.

Recommendation 7: As a matter of priority, review the Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs) for alignment with the appropriate NQF level, and then map them to the revised BScBA PILOs.

Recommendation 8: Extend the programme's curriculum review process to include consultation with additional external stakeholders (such as alumni and professional bodies) and regional/international benchmarking reference points.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

UCB's Qualification Design, Approval and Review Policy shows formal arrangements for the review of the programme. UCB has submitted an External Reviewer Report, dated December 2022 for the programme, in addition to evidence on benchmarking the PILOs with one local and one regional universities. The Panel also learned that all academic departments at UCB have joined the Explorance Regional - Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium in 2023, however, benchmarking the BScBA programme with them is still in the pilot phase. Furthermore, UCB has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Finance Institutions (AAOIFI), resulting in the approval of including several courses from the AAOIFI Certified Islamic Professional Accountant curriculum into the Islamic Finance Concentration. However, the inclusion was not reflected in the updated Programme Specification. Therefore, UCB should include the approved courses from the AAOIFI Certified Islamic Professional Accountant curriculum in the Islamic Finance Concentration and extend the curriculum review of other concentrations of the BScBA programme to include consultation with other external stakeholders and professional bodies.

Recommendation 9: Review the departmental and concentration electives to ensure they are consistent with the programme aims and outcomes.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

The Panel notes that the department and concentration electives in the study plans have been reviewed only based on a Benchmarking Report with two local universities, which was approved by the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee (LTARC). However, there was no compelling evidence that the review was aligned with the concentration's PILOs nor include the electives of Islamic Finance concentration. Moreover, the number of credit hours/courses offered in the concentration electives is considered high and some of the elective courses offered are not related to the concentration specialisation. Thus, UCB should formally review all departmental and concentration electives, taking into consideration feedback from different stakeholders and the number and relevancy of elective courses, to ensure they are consistent with the programme aims and outcomes.

Recommendation 10: Review the textbooks and references used in the programme to ensure their currency and consistently integrate research publications and professional practice into course materials.

Recommendation 11: Review and update relevant policies to reflect the current use of elearning methods and develop mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of its hybrid approach to eLearning.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

UCB has developed the E-Learning and Blended Learning Policy in 2024. The policy considers aspects of general framework and guidelines that serve as a set of principles and rules that govern the development, delivery, and evaluation of online courses and programmes. However, there was no evidence in the Programme Specification and samples of Courses Specifications on how UCB reflect the application of e-learning and blended learning on study plans. Therefore, UCB should integrate e-learning approaches in teaching and learning, and develop mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of the hybrid approach to e-learning.

Recommendation 12: Consistently use marking criteria in all BScBA courses and assessments, which also function as a mechanism for providing students with feedback on their progress and performance.

Standard 2

Efficiency of the Programme

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

Recommendation 13: Conduct a review of the BScBA admission requirements that is informed by international benchmarking and performance data, to ensure that the requirements are aligned with the programme level and international academic standards.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 14: Benchmark the in-house English Placement Test for alignment with international English testing standards and practices, to ensure that it is a valid and reliable measure of applicants' English language proficiency.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 15: As a matter of urgency, develop and implement a long-term recruitment strategy, to ensure there are sufficient faculty members available to deliver the programme, including senior-ranked faculty.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

The Panel acknowledges that UCB has made progress in strengthening its faculty capacity within the BA Department. The newly submitted Long-Term Staffing Plan (2022–2028) provides clear enrolment-linked projections and targets for the student–staff ratio, which is planned to stabilise at approximately 1:26 by the Academic Year (AY) 2026–2027. This demonstrates that UCB has adopted a systematic approach to forecasting staffing requirements in alignment with student growth projections. Furthermore, the revised Risk Register (AY 2024–2025) now includes mitigation measures under risk item "BA06 – Faculty Shortage," such as enhancing recruitment activities, developing staff partnerships, and formulating a recruitment and retention strategy, with the risk trend marked as reducing. Evidence of active recruitment was also presented through multiple LinkedIn announcements and related documentation.

However, despite these positive steps, there is still no formally approved faculty recruitment and retention strategy that articulates procedures for recruitment, promotion, and succession planning, nor are there defined targets for the proportion of senior-ranked faculty or specific retention mechanisms. While the staffing plan quantifies projected numbers, it does not outline qualitative elements such as rank balance, workload management, or research

capacity. Additionally, the risk register's high rating (score 4) underscores the significant risk of faculty shortage. Therefore, UCB should finalise, approve, and implement a comprehensive Faculty Recruitment and Retention Strategy for the BA Department that clearly specifies staffing targets by academic rank, includes retention and succession planning measures, links to enrolment projections, and establishes measurable indicators and governance mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and review.

Recommendation 16: Align actual faculty workloads with UCB's workload expectations to ensure a balance between teaching, research, community engagement, graduation project supervision, quality assurance and administrative responsibilities.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 17: Use the Staff Training Needs forms to develop and implement formal professional development plans for faculty members, which are also informed by performance appraisals.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 18: Monitor faculty turnover and retention rates and use data from faculty satisfaction surveys to make improvements that will reduce fluctuations in retention rates.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 19: Ensure that all stakeholders with mobility issues are able to access classrooms and other facilities on upper floors.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 20: Implement formal mechanisms to ensure that maintenance of the Institution's facilities is undertaken systematically.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 21: Make appropriate arrangements to ensure stakeholders have access to timely first aid on campus in case of a medical emergency.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 22: Deploy a more suitable virtual learning platform to deliver academic programmes, which includes features that support learning in a blended learning environment.

Recommendation 23: Undertake systematic and formal monitoring of the utilisation of eresources and implement action plans to enhance the utilisation rates where required.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 24: Provide students with appropriate social and recreational facilities, which are evaluated for effectiveness.

Standard 3

Academic Standards of Students and Graduates

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

Recommendation 25: Review and update the mapping of assessments to CILOs in all BScBA course specifications, to ensure their appropriateness and validity.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 26: Ensure the consistent use of marking rubrics and descriptors to evaluate students' assessments and ensure the provision of constructive feedback to students in all BScBA courses.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 27: Develop and implement mechanisms to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme's assessment processes and make improvements to assessment practices accordingly, to ensure that they are consistently and robustly deployed.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 28: Review the effectiveness of the institutional processes for deterring, detecting, penalizing, and monitoring plagiarism, and develop a holistic approach which fosters a culture of academic integrity.

Judgement: Not Addressed

UCB has an Academic Honesty and Integrity Policy and Plagiarism Policy covering all aspects of academic integrity, including plagiarism and cheating, as well as disciplinary procedures. Elements of the policies have been included in the Student Handbook and penalties of academic misconduct are clearly listed in the Student Code of Conduct Policy. UCB subscribes to Turnitin, which students must use to submit their coursework. A maximum similarity index threshold of 20% has been set for all coursework submissions and students can re-submit their work up to three times to ensure that the threshold is not exceeded. The penalties for plagiarism are defined in the Policy and consistent with HEC regulations. The Panel requested samples of plagiarism cases to verify how the plagiarism policy is implemented; however, since multiple submissions are allowed, based on the Plagiarism Policy, to reduce the similarity index below the threshold, no plagiarism violations have been reported. The Panel notes that this approach only focuses on an arbitrary threshold that represents a similarity percentage, rather than the plagiarism percentage. Submissions which are below the 20%

threshold may still contain plagiarised text copied from unacknowledged sources. Accordingly, there was no clear evidence on reviewing the effectiveness of the plagiarism procedure. Therefore, UCB should review the effectiveness of the institutional processes for deterring, detecting and penalising plagiarism to ensure academic integrity.

Recommendation 29: Implement mechanisms to effectively address research ethics and ethical considerations and ensure that these are clearly understood by all stakeholders.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 30: Apply internal moderation processes to coursework assessments to ensure they are valid and adequately aligned with CILOs.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 31: Implement external post-moderation of assessments to verify student achievement of PILOs and ensure academic standards in the programme are met.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 32: Reduce the assessment weighting allocated to the site supervisor, to ensure that CILOs and PILOs are appropriately assessed by the academic supervisor.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 33: Provide an orientation or training session for site supervisors and ensure that regular site visits are undertaken by the academic supervisors throughout the duration of the internship.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 34: Develop and implement a formal mechanism for evaluating and monitoring the effectiveness of the internship arrangements, which involves gathering feedback from students and site supervisors and is used to make improvements to the management of the internship.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 35: Systematically monitor and report the cohort completion rates and ratios of admitted students to successful graduates in the BScBA programme.

Recommendation 36: Utilise and follow up on student retention and progression data to ensure that academic standards in the programme are met.

Judgement: Partially addressed

UCB has a system to report a cohort analysis for the programme, as evident in the BScBA Students Statistics. However, the Panel reviewed the Annual Programme Monitoring and Accomplishment Report to evaluate the utilisation of cohort analysis to inform decision making and found no evidence on how the BA Department use the data to ensure that academic standards are met. The Department Council Minutes of Meetings only shows that cohort analysis is discussed during the meetings. However, there is no evidence on how the academic programme is utilising the outcomes of cohort analysis to enhance the relevance of the programme. Therefore, UCB should utilise the information generated from the cohort data to ensure that academic standards in the programme are met.

Recommendation 37: Systematically monitor employer satisfaction with BScBA graduates and use the collected feedback to inform programme reviews.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

The Panel reviewed the Employer Satisfaction Survey Data and found that the survey is related to UCB graduates including BScBA graduates, as the survey includes a section where employer should pick the relevant programme. However, the Analysis Employers Satisfaction Survey Report does not present the results per each programme. This shows that employers' satisfaction of BScBA is not properly monitored at the programme level to inform decision-making as noticed in the Department Meeting Minutes. Therefore, UCB should systematically analyse employer satisfaction survey on a programme level to ensure the achievement of learning outcomes and make improvements by the academic department.

Standard 4

Effectiveness of Quality Management and Assurance

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

Recommendation 38: Ensure that all institutional policies related to the BScBA programme are effectively and consistently implemented.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 39: Undertake more rigorous monitoring of the QMS to ensure that it is being deployed consistently and effectively, and that improvements are made in response to recommendations and action plans.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

The Panel acknowledges that UCB has made progress in strengthening its Quality Management System (QMS) through updated Quality Assurance (QA) policies, the establishment of institutional and departmental QA structures, and the routine submission of monitoring reports to the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) and LTARC. These actions indicate that quality processes are operational across the College. However, the evidence does not yet demonstrate a fully centralised and standardised approach to monitoring the QMS at institutional level. While individual departments maintain QA records and implement improvement plans, the mechanisms for aggregating, analysing, and reporting outcomes to inform strategic decision-making remain fragmented. Moreover, there is limited evidence of how identified issues are systematically tracked to closure or how improvements resulting from QA reviews are communicated across units. To achieve greater consistency and institutional effectiveness, UCB should develop and implement an integrated, data-driven approach that links findings to measurable improvements in teaching, learning, and programme management.

Recommendation 40: Update the terms of reference for all committees to reflect their new remit and composition.

Judgement: Fully Addressed

Recommendation 41: Implement the annual programme reviews more rigorously, with appropriate reflection and critical analysis of the data, and ensure that the review outcomes are fully aligned with the program improvement plans.

Recommendation 42: Ensure that the periodic programme reviews are consistently implemented and involve a broad range of internal and external stakeholders and a variety of reference points, which are used to inform changes in the BScBA programme.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

UCB has developed a comprehensive policy and framework for conducting periodic programme reviews, outlining clear procedures, stakeholder engagement, and integration within the LTARC and QAAC cycles. The documentation specifies that reviews are scheduled every four years, and a review report has been submitted. However, the review report does not clearly show the mechanism followed to review all aspects of the programme, nor how the resulted recommendations are to be resolved to enhance the programme. Additionally, although the review report briefly mentions meeting with alumni and advisory board to gather their feedback, it provides general recommendations, while lacking programme-specific ones. Hence, the report does not explicitly confirm that a formal review has been completed or that outcomes have informed programme improvements. Therefore, UCB should ensure broad stakeholder participation, clear documentation of findings, and evidence of how review outcomes are used to inform programme enhancement and decision-making.

Recommendation 43: Adopt a more systematic and rigorous approach to benchmarking in the BScBA programme, which includes appropriate and carefully selected reference points and uses benchmarking outcomes to inform improvements in the programme.

Judgement: Partially Addressed

UCB has developed comprehensive policies, templates, and appendices to guide the benchmarking process and has joined the Higher Education Benchmarking Consortium as part of its commitment to continuous improvement. These documents outline the benchmarking framework and procedures to be applied across programmes. However, the approval and decision-making flow for benchmarking activities is not clearly defined, and the submitted evidence does not demonstrate how benchmarking results are formally reviewed, approved, or translated into programme modifications. Furthermore, while benchmarking exercises have reportedly been initiated, the benchmarking outcomes and resulting actions—such as changes to electives or PILOs—were not clearly presented or discussed in the provided minutes of meetings. As a result, there is no verifiable evidence that benchmarking outcomes have been systematically analysed or used to inform curriculum development or programme enhancement. Therefore, UCB should formalise and document the approval process for benchmarking, ensure that benchmarking outcomes are clearly reported, discussed, and approved through QAAC and LTARC.

Recommendation 44: Expand the range of surveys used to collect data from stakeholders, deploy surveys regularly and systematically, increase response rates to enhance data

validity and reliability, use survey results to make improvements and inform decision-making, and communicate changes made to stakeholders.

Judgement: Not Addressed

UCB has developed a comprehensive Stakeholder Survey Policy and established a suite of survey instruments targeting students, alumni, employers, staff, and the wider community. The framework outlines timelines, responsibilities, and processes for collecting and analysing stakeholder feedback, supported by QAAC oversight. However, the evidence provided does not include programme-level survey reports for AY 2023–2024 or AY 2024–2025, nor does it present analysed data, response rates, or documented follow-up actions demonstrating how feedback has informed programme or institutional improvements.

While meeting minutes from QAAC and LTARC reference survey administration, there is no clear evidence of systematic discussion, analysis, or implementation of actions based on survey outcomes, nor documentation showing that results were communicated back to stakeholders. Furthermore, the Risk Register identifies low response rates as a recurring issue, but no formal strategy or monitoring mechanism was provided to demonstrate targeted interventions to improve participation from students, alumni, and employers. Therefore, UCB should produce and analyse programme-level survey reports, ensure findings are systematically reviewed, link survey outcomes to programme improvements, and establish formal feedback mechanisms to communicate results and actions taken to all stakeholder groups.

Recommendation 45: Conduct a more comprehensive and programme-focused market study which is effectively used to inform the BSc-BA programme, its curriculum reviews and improvements.

III. Conclusion

The follow-up process was conducted based on the programme's progress report and supporting materials submitted to the BQA, which detailed the progress achieved in addressing the recommendations from the review. Furthermore, the process incorporated documents provided during the virtual follow-up visit, as well as evidence collected through interviews with relevant stakeholders.

The follow-up Panel concluded that 30 recommendations were fully addressed, 13 were partially addressed, and two remained not addressed.

Overall, the evidence showcased the institution's ability and commitment to sustaining the improvements necessary to uphold the programme's quality. As a result, the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration programme offered by the University College of Bahrain received a general judgment of "Adequate Progress".

IV. Appendices

Appendix A: Judgement per Recommendation

Judgement	Criteria
Fully Addressed	The institution has demonstrated marked progress in addressing the recommendation. The actions taken have led to significant improvements in the identified aspect(s) and, as a consequence, in meeting the indicator's requirements.
Partially Addressed	The institution has taken positive action to address the recommendation. There is evidence that these actions have produced improvements and that these improvements are sustainable. The actions taken are having a positive, yet limited impact on the ability of the institution to meet the indicator's requirements.
Not Addressed	The institution has not taken appropriate actions to address the recommendation and/or actions taken have little or no impact on the review standards. Weaknesses persist in relation to this recommendation.

Appendix B: Overall Judgement

Overall Judgement	Criteria
Good Progress	The institution has fully addressed the majority of the recommendations contained in the review report, these include recommendations that have most impact on the quality of its delivery and academic standards. The remaining recommendations are partially addressed.
Adequate Progress	The institution has at least partially addressed most of the recommendations contained in the review report, including those that have major impact on the quality of its delivery and academic standards. There is a number of recommendations that have been fully addressed and there is evidence that the institution can maintain the progress achieved.
Inadequate Progress	The institution has made little or no progress in addressing a significant number of the recommendations contained in the review report, especially those that have main impact on the quality of its delivery and academic standards.