هيئة جودة التعليم والتدريب
Education & Training Quality Authority
مـمـلـكـة الـبــحـريــن KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Directorate of Higher Education & Vocational Institutions Performance Reviews

Follow-up Review Report

University College of Bahrain

Department of Business Administration

Master of Business Administration

Follow-up Visit Date: 22 October 2025

Review Date: 12 – 14 December 2022

F004-C3-F004

Table of Contents

Acronyms

AY	Academic Year
BA	Business Administration
BQA	Education & Training Quality Authority
DHV	Directorate of Higher Education & Vocational Institutions Performance Reviews
LTARC	Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee
MBA	Master of Business Administration
PEO	Programme Education Objective
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAAC	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
QMS	Quality Management System
UCB	University College of Bahrain
UILO	University Intended Learning Outcome

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *3*

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 Master of Business Administration (MBA) 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 MBA 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 MBA 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).

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *4*

II. Standards and Indicators

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Standard 1

The Learning Programme

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

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

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 2: Update the MBA Risk Register to include actual and current programme risks and urgently deploy effective mitigation strategies to address the insufficiency of full-time faculty 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. However, very few identified risks related to the MBA programme with mitigations were reported. The Panel also found that the programme risks that were not mitigated in an academic year were not included in the following year for follow up and closure. However, it was not clear what mechanism is used to monitor and ensure that the academic risks and mitigation achievement are monitored and updated appropriately. 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: Ensure Embedding the 'internationalization' University Intended Learning Outcome (UILO) into the programme graduate attributes and to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs).

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The MBA programme has seven updated graduate attributes developed with the objective of graduating students who are knowledgeable, collaborative, socially responsible, professional, life-long learners as identified in the updated revised Programme Specification. There is a clear mapping of these attributes with the Programme Education Objective (PEOs) and PILOs. The Panel reviewed the Programme Specification and found that the internationalisation UILO has been embedded in the programmes' graduate attributes under (GA2- Socially responsible

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025 5

global citizen). However, it is not clear that this graduate attribute is related to internationalisation. In 2025, UCB has conducted a PILOs benchmarking exercise with local, regional and international programmes. Several recommendations were concluded and discussed in the Department Council including the need of embedding global business outlook into the PILOs; however, the recommendations were not implemented as noticed in the updated Programme Specification. Therefore, UCB needs to embed the internationalisation UILO into the PEOs and PILOs to ensure that graduates develop a global perspective through the programme.

Recommendation 4: Ensure that the mapping of the CILOs to PILOs is conducted in all the courses.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 5: Update the MBA Curriculum to reflect professional body requirements, alignment with international benchmarks, and incorporate input from a broader range of external stakeholders.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 6: Ensure that textbooks and references used in the programme are current, and up-to-date and that information and resources from current professional practice and latest research are being integrated into the courses.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 7: Develop a formal mechanism to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being covered in the research-based courses and that their achievement is being assessed.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 8: Develop and implement a clear explicit E-learning policy and mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of its hybrid teaching approach.

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 its hybrid approach to e-learning.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *6*

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Standard 2

Efficiency of the Programme

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

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Recommendation 9: Use only formal English language proficiency tests (e.g., TOEFL or IELTS) to evaluate students' English language skills and preparedness for the programme.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 10: Develop and implement appropriate remedial or bridging courses for the MBA student applicants who do not have an undergraduate business degree or business background.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

UCB has developed BUS500 – Foundations of Business, a proposed bridging course for MBA applicants without a prior business background, reflecting the institution's recognition of the need for preparatory support. The course design consolidates multiple business disciplines into a single module and, according to UCB, was benchmarked against regional and international practices. However, during the follow up visit, the Panel confirmed that BUS500 has not yet been approved by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) or the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee (LTARC) and has not been implemented. Moreover, the rationale for adopting one integrated module instead of separate subject-specific courses (e.g., accounting, economics, management) was not supported by sufficient evidence. Upon review, the Panel also found inconsistencies between UCB's claimed benchmarking source and the actual programme structure at the referenced university, where the course is offered within a different postgraduate programme, not the MBA. This raises concerns about the rigour and accuracy of the benchmarking process used to justify the design decision. Therefore, UCB should review and validate its benchmarking references, ensure the proposed bridging course aligns with verified international models, seek formal approval, and implement the course with clear evaluation measures to assess its effectiveness in preparing non-business students for MBA-level study.

Recommendation 11: Conduct formal reviews of the MBA admission criteria, which are informed by student performance data, feedback from stakeholders, and outcomes of international benchmarking.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025

7

UCB has developed a Benchmarking Policy and an approved template to guide the review of admission criteria. While these tools provide a structured mechanism, the evidence indicates that the framework was not properly applied in the review of the MBA admission requirements. The submitted benchmarking exercise lacks a clear rationale for selecting comparator universities and does not demonstrate why these institutions represent appropriate reference points. Furthermore, the benchmarking outcomes were not appended to the admission policy nor linked to any formal improvement plan showing how findings would inform revisions to the entry criteria. No evidence was provided to show that student performance data—such as CGPA trends, retention, or progression—has been systematically analysed or discussed within QAAC or departmental meetings to assess the adequacy of existing admission thresholds. Although most MBA students perform well academically, there is no documentation showing how this evidence has been used to validate or adjust the GPA entry standard, or to refine related requirements such as work experience or bridging courses. As such, the review remains incomplete and lacks evidence of integration between benchmarking, data analysis, and decision-making. Therefore, UCB needs to conduct a formal, data-informed review of the MBA admission criteria using its approved benchmarking template, provide justification for selected comparators, and develop an improvement plan that integrates benchmarking results, stakeholder feedback, and student performance data into the revision and approval of admission requirements.

Recommendation 12: Develop and implement a long-term recruitment plan, 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 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

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025

8

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 13: 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 14: Monitor staff turnover and retention rates and use data from faculty satisfaction surveys to make improvements to ensure the retention of highly qualified faculty members.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 15: Ensure that all stakeholders with mobility issues are able to access classrooms and other facilities on upper floors.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 16: Implement formal mechanisms to ensure that maintenance of the Institution's facilities is undertaken systematically.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 17: Make appropriate arrangements to ensure stakeholders have access to timely first aid on campus in case of a medical emergency.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 18: Deploy a more suitable virtual learning platform to deliver academic programmes, which includes features that support learning in a blended learning environment.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 19: Undertake systematic and formal monitoring of the utilisation of e-resources and implement action plans to enhance the utilisation rates where required.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *9*

Recommendation 20: Provide students with appropriate social and recreational facilities, which are evaluated for effectiveness.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *10*

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 21: Carefully review and update the mapping of assessments to course intended learning outcomes in each MBA Course Specifications document, to ensure that it is appropriate and valid.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 22: Ensure that marking rubrics and descriptors are used consistently to evaluate coursework assessments and provide students with feedback in all MBA courses.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 23: 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 24: 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 MBA 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 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. Submissions which are below the 20% threshold may still contain plagiarised text copied from unacknowledged sources. Accordingly, there was no clear

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *11*

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

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 26: Apply moderation processes to coursework assessments to ensure they are valid and adequately aligned with CILOs.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 27: 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 28: Implement appropriate mechanisms to systematically evaluate students' satisfaction with thesis/project supervision arrangements.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 29: Systematically monitor and report the completion rates and ratios of admitted students to successful graduates in the MBA programme.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 30: Systematically monitor employer satisfaction with MBA graduates and use the collected feedback to inform programme reviews.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The Panel reviewed the Employer Satisfaction Survey Data and Analysis and found that the survey is related to UCB graduates including MBA graduates, as the survey includes a section where employer should pick the relevant programme. However, the report showing the Analysis Employers Satisfaction Survey does not present the results per each programme. This shows that employers' satisfaction of MBA programme 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.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *12*

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 31: Effectively apply all policies related to the programme in a consistent manner.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 32: Implement rigorous monitoring of the QMS to ensure consistent deployment and follow up of recommendations, improvements and action plans.

Judgement: *Partially Addressed*

The Panel acknowledges that UCB has made progress in strengthening its Quality Management System (QMS) through updated QA policies, the establishment of institutional and departmental QA structures, and the routine submission of monitoring reports to the 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 departments. 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 33: Update the terms of reference for all committees to reflect their new remit and composition.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 34: Ensure consistent implementation of the annual programme review based on institutional policies, and the alignment of the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025

13

Recommendation 35: Ensure involvement of a broad range of internal and external stakeholders, and the utilisation of a variety of institutional and programme data and reference points, in the programme reviews, and align the review outcomes and recommendations with improvement plans that are consistently implemented and monitored.

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 in programme reviews, clear documentation of findings, and evidence of how review outcomes are used to inform programme enhancement and decision-making.

Recommendation 36: 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

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *14*

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

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

Recommendation 38: Implement rigorous monitoring and reviewing of the applied mechanisms of the market needs study of the programme

Judgement: *Fully Addressed*

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *15*

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 27 recommendations were fully addressed, nine 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 Master of Business Administration programme offered by the University College of Bahrain received a general judgment of "Adequate Progress".

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025

16

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.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025

17

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.

BQA

Academic Programme Reviews– University College of Bahrain – Department of Business Administration – Master of Business Administration – 22 October 2025   *18*