International Quality Review of Applied Science University

January 2022

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an International Quality Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Applied Science University. The review took place from 24 to 26 January 2022 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
- Dr Nadeem Khan (international reviewer)
- Ms Tess Winther (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Yue Song.

International Quality Review (IQR) offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to have a review by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). The review benchmarks the institution's quality assurance processes against international quality assurance standards set out in Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG).[1]

In International Quality Review, the QAA review team:

- makes a conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Quality Review.

A summary of the findings is given in the following section: Key Findings with a fuller commentary in Explanations of the findings. The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated section explains the method for International Quality Review[3] and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms used in this document see the glossary at the end of this report.

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[1] www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/commercial-and-international-services/international-quality-review

Key findings

Executive summary

Applied Science University (ASU) was established as a private university in the Kingdom of Bahrain and granted its licence by the Ministry of Education according to the decree issued by the Minister's Council No WD 140/2004 dated 5 July 2004.

The University is currently offering 13 undergraduate programmes and five postgraduate programmes across four colleges, including two engineering programmes in collaboration with London South Bank University and two Management and Business Studies and Accounting and Finance Programmes in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University. All courses are delivered at one campus located in East Ekir. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the University moved its education online and created a set of strategic and operational plans and guidelines for supporting students' online learning. Currently, for the academic year 2021-22, the University is using a blended approach in teaching and learning where classes are taught both in face-to-face and online synchronous mode, depending upon student needs and government regulations.

There are currently 2,411 students enrolled at ASU, of whom 88% are undergraduate, and 12% postgraduate; 6% are International students while 94% are from Bahrain locally. There are currently 197 academic and non-academic staff employed at the University.

ASU has an overarching Board of Trustees, with the University leadership team overseeing all operations. The University Council, chaired by the President, is accountable to the Board of Trustees and provides oversight of strategic development and operational plans. The Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council has delegated authority from the University Council to oversee the operation of procedures for the maintenance of standards and assurance of quality for all courses. ASU maintains a comprehensive committee structure that covers academic and non-academic areas to assure the delivery of its programmes. The committee structure includes effective reporting arrangements for communication to pass from one level to another. Each committee at department level reports to an appropriate committee at college level, which in turn reports to a committee at University level. University-level committees report to the University Council, and the University Council reports to the Board of Trustees.

ASU has a clear mission which reflects the three core functions of a higher education institution (HEI) (learning and teaching, research and community engagement): 'ASU is dedicated to offering students and staff the opportunity to contribute to the sustainable development of society and community. In addition, ASU strives to be recognised nationally and internationally for its reputation in applied teaching and learning, research and community engagement. Furthermore, ASU is committed to enhancing graduates' employability through innovative approaches and entrepreneurial practices in order to help them compete in international markets'. The mission reflects the University's aspirations, including its vision to become: 'a leading university promoting excellence in applied education and research in Bahrain and the region'.

The University's Strategic Plan sets out how the mission is achieved. The original Strategic Plan was finalised in 2013 and covered the period 2013 to 2018. It was revisited and refreshed in 2015 and later in a mid-cycle review to form the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, and now the Strategic Plan 2020-2025. The Strategic Plan 2020-2025 was developed after consultation with staff, students, alumni, programme advisory boards and Board of Trustees (BOT) which granted the final approval.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which ASU meets the 10 ESG standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Quality Review (June 2021). The QAA review team was provided with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence by the University. During the three-day online review visit, which took place from 24 to 26 January 2022, the review team held a total of six meetings with the President, senior management team, academic staff, professional support staff, students and alumni. The review team also had the opportunity to conduct a virtual observation of the University's online systems.

The review team came to the overall conclusion that Applied Science University meets all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015), Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance. The review team has identified two areas of good practice and five recommendations.

QAA's conclusions about Applied Science University

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at Applied Science University.

European Standards and Guidelines

Applied Science University meets all of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Applied Science University.

- ASU has partnered with Advance HE to offer a fellowship scheme for its academic staff to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and student support. A high proportion of academic staff have achieved certifications at different levels of the fellowships (ESG Standard 1.5)
- The University's IT systems integrate databases and other sources of information allowing accessibility of data and the embedding of management information into decision-making processes at all levels of the institution (ESG Standard 1.7).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Applied Science University.

- Make the Quality Manual, or an alternative description of the institutional quality policy publicly available, for example by posting it on the institution's website. (ESG Standard 1.1)
- Strengthen the process for reviewing policies and other key documents and develop an effective process to identify the implications of each policy revision on other policies and key documents to be introduced, to ensure that any asynchronicities are detected and rectified before revised policies are published (ESG Standard 1.1).
- Present programme-specific entry requirements in a more consistent manner (ESG Standard 1.4).
- Formalise its internal procedures for maintaining and approving public information to ensure it is accurate and up-to-date (ESG Standard 1.8).
- Collect student voice in a more structured manner, such as explicit involvement of students in deliberative processes, or consultation with representative students as part of the periodic review and programme approval processes (ESG Standard 1.9).

Explanation of the findings about Applied Science University

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the review method, also on the QAA website.

Standard 1.1   Policy for quality assurance

Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.

Findings

1.1   ASU states that it has 'a well-established culture of quality and continuous improvement which is integrated, and systemic. ASU's governance and management is sound and effective, based on a mission and Strategic Plan which are forward-thinking, outward-looking and linked to the needs of the Kingdom of Bahrain'.

1.2   The quality management system is based on four principles: that quality assurance and enhancement should be systemic and integrated; must incorporate continuous assurance and enhancement; must cover the full range of academic services (teaching, learning and assessment, research and community engagement); and must include the effectiveness and efficiency of administrative services.

1.3   The Strategic Plan includes the vision to become 'A leading university promoting excellence in applied education and research in Bahrain and the region'. The strategic objectives include 'Quality Enhancement. Enhance the quality of the university's provisions and operations'. This is explained further: 'Ensure that quality practices are implemented in all ASU's operations and are effectively communicated across the University, taking into consideration the requirements of national and international stakeholders and accreditation bodies'. It includes a number of key performance indicators that relate to quality assurance and enhancement.

1.4   Quality assurance and enhancement are themes that underpin the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, the declared aim of which is 'to enable all students to have an excellent learning experience and to continually improve the quality of that experience in the light of changes in student needs'. It acknowledges the importance of effective communication of quality measures to both teachers and learners.

1.5   The Quality Assurance Manual describes the quality assurance roles and structures, together with the processes for new programme development, internal annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes, benchmarking, and course portfolio management.

1.6   ASU has an organisational structure that includes bodies to oversee and implement quality assurance processes. The Bylaws state that University Council carries ultimate responsibility for all matters related to the quality of teaching and learning. There is a strategic-level committee, The Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) Council, and operational units, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) and College Quality Assurance and Accreditation Units (CQAAU).

1.7   The remit of the QAA Council is to advise University Council on the effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement processes and to ensure their compatibility with key external reference points. This includes overseeing internal and external quality audits, including Education and Training Quality Authority of Bahrain (BQA) Institutional Reviews and Higher Education Council (HEC) Institutional Reviews.

1.8   The University's annual reports, available on the website, include a section on quality assurance, which mostly covers university rankings and external reviews.

1.9   The quality assurance policy of ASU is summarised in the Quality Manual. It cites several of the institutional policies, which expand on, and provide additional detail to, the quality assurance policy.

1.10   The Quality Manual has formal status within the institution, it is explicitly listed in the University's Bylaws and is produced and owned by the University Council. The Bylaws also define the responsibilities of the QAA Council.

1.11   The Quality Manual is available internally via the ASU Knowledge Hub. It is assimilated into workshops and training events for staff. The Quality Manual and policies are made available to stakeholders as required, for example, the External Examiner Policy is given to external examiners, and the Programme Advisory Board Policy is provided to members of Programme Advisory Boards. However, the Quality Manual is not publicly available and is not on the institution's outward-facing website. The review team **recommends** that the Quality Manual, or an alternative description of the institutional quality policy, should be made publicly available, for example by posting it on the institution's website.

1.12   The QA Manual is reviewed on a periodic basis, at least every two years, or more often if required, the current version being approved by University Council at its meeting in December 2020. However, the review team noticed some minor inconsistencies between the Quality Manual and some of the policies it summarised, and more significant inconsistencies between the policies and other documents. Examples include:

- The membership regulations for Programme Advisory Boards differs between the Committee Terms of Reference document and the Programme Advisory Board Policy.
- There is an inconsistency between the admissions section of the website and the entry requirements stated in the documents. For example, an additional distinction of 70% for Law admission is not mentioned on the website.

1.13   When this was brought to the attention of senior staff, the response was that the University operates a version control system. Each document contains a statement of approval, which must be valid. There is a published schedule for the review of policies by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC) and modifications to policies are considered and approved by both University Council and the Board of Trustees. Occasionally, documents lose their synchronisation when an individual document is revised. This asynchronicity will be detected and corrected when the dependent documents are reviewed as per the schedule.

1.14   However, while the policy on review of policies states a two-year cycle, the following policies have been more than two years without review: Students at Risk Policy (2015); Equality and Diversity Policy (2018); Academic Advising Policy (2017); Assessment and Misconduct Policy (2017). The review team **recommends** that the process for reviewing policies and other key documents is strengthened and an effective process for identifying the implications of each policy revision on other policies and key documents be introduced, to ensure that any asynchronicities are detected and rectified before revised policies are published.

1.15   The quality policy defines the organisation of the University's quality assurance system. The Quality Assurance Manual clearly sets out the responsibilities of committees, units and individuals that have a responsibility for quality assurance matters, including the QAA Council, the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre, the College Quality Assurance and Accreditation Units, the Administrative Quality Assurance and Accreditation

Coordinator and the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Coordinating Group. Minutes of the QAA Council provide evidence that it is discharging its responsibilities effectively.

1.16   QAA Council receives reports from the academic, professional support and administrative units that together form the QAA Annual report. QAAC in turn reports on its activities through the QAAC Annual Accomplishment Report. Together, these reports are the culmination of an institution-wide process of setting and accomplishing action plans.

1.17   In addition to action plans arising from periodic and external reviews, each unit of the University prepares an annual operational plan that aligns with the Strategic Plan. The plans are considered and a budget is approved. The quality of the student experience is prioritised in the allocation of resource, and decisions not to fund any initiative includes a risk assessment. Progress with the planned activities is visible on the senior management dashboard. Each unit is expected to complete its annual plan by the end of the year. The operational plans and their completion are considered by University Council.

1.18   The quality policy supports the departments, colleges and other organisational units as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance.

1.19   The University's Bylaws make it clear that at college level, it is the College Council that carries responsibility for quality assurance of its activities and, similarly, each Departmental Council has responsibility for quality assurance matters within the Department. The Vice-Dean of each college, and the Head of each department are responsible for implementing quality and accreditation requirements within their parts of the University.

1.20   ASU has established a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Coordinating Group, which meets every month and carries responsibility for coordinating quality assurance activity across the Centre, the colleges, and the administrative offices, to ensure that the processes needed for the University's quality management system are implemented, maintained and reviewed at all levels.

1.21   The substantial contribution to quality assurance made by the teaching staff is recognised in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which lists the measures of success of the quality of the provision. These include the results of programme quality review processes, the number of programmes with international accreditation, and the number of staff development opportunities on quality-related issues.

1.22   Teaching staff clearly recognised the role they played in quality assurance of the teaching they provided, and that this was guided by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. They confirmed that they were able to access the Quality Manual and other institutional policies on the Knowledge Hub, and spoke of the peer-review process, and the student survey, both of which provide feedback on their performance.

1.23   ASU disseminates information about quality assurance matters through the fortnightly meetings with Deans and Vice-Deans, through monthly staff briefing sessions, through the President's News Digest, and through social media.

1.24   Academic freedom at ASU is guaranteed by Article 8 of the institution's Basic Bylaw. This is reinforced by Article 11 of the Academic Staff Bylaw, which states 'An academic staff member in his or her scope of work at the university shall be granted the freedom of thought, expression, publication and expressing his or her opinion with respect to teaching, academic research and other university activities within the limits of the existing laws, with a commitment to the values and procedures of the university, and instructions issued therein'.

1.25   The central importance of ethical conduct is also explicit in the University's Bylaws, which include a Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct Bylaw for staff and a Students' Misconduct Bylaw that specifically identifies academic fraud. The details of how this is enacted in practice is provided in the Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy, the Research Handbook and Research Ethics Policy, and the staff handbook. Teaching staff confirmed that the University was vigilant against academic fraud.

1.26   ASU's policies guard against discrimination and intolerance. The principle of respecting equality and diversity is embedded in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, one of the objectives of which is to recognise the diversity of staff and to provide equal professional development opportunities for all. The Equality and Diversity Policy lists and describes the categories of potential discrimination against which the policy guards, including age, disability, marital status, family circumstances, race (colour, ethnicity, or national background), religion or belief and gender.

1.27   ASU's quality policy supports the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance. Several of the university committees, including University Council, have external members, or the provision to recruit an external member when required. Programme Advisory Boards, which include external members from the public and private sectors, ensure the provision of an external perspective to programme development. There is external representation in the panel for Periodic Programme Reviews, and external examiners play an important role in securing standards and enhancing quality.

1.28   The quality policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. The specific processes are described in the Quality Assurance Manual and accompanying documents, such as the Monitoring and Review Policy. These include defined procedures for the development of new programmes, annual and periodic review of programmes, benchmarking, and course portfolio management, in addition to periodic external review. Academic, administrative, and professional support services undergo periodic audit.

1.29   Examples of enhancements arising from the quality assurance processes are listed in the self-evaluation document (SED), including updating the study plan of the Bachelor in Accounting and Finance programme as a result of the periodic review process, aligning course content of the BA programme with professional body syllabi, following external reviewer comments during the periodic review process, and enhancing processes for internships, as a result of the audit conducted by the QAAC. Also included is enhancing administrative procedures during the process of achieving the International Standards Organization (ISO) 9001:2015 certification for the University's administrative provision and introducing the new Staff Satisfaction Survey with QAAC Services to assess the level of staff satisfaction with QAAC.

1.30   The responsibilities of the QAA Council include advising University Council on the effectiveness of its quality assurance and enhancement processes and ensuring that they are fully compatible with key external reference points.

1.31   The policy for quality assurance at ASU is deeply embedded in the culture and strategic management of the institution. It is developed and implemented through appropriate structures and processes, and includes the involvement of external stakeholders. While the policy is not currently made available to the public, overall, the team concludes that Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance is **met**.

Standard 1.2   Design and approval of programmes

Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

Findings

2.1   ASU offers programmes at the bachelor's and master's levels. The University has established Bachelor Degree Bylaw and Graduate Studies Bylaw that define the structure of bachelor's and master's programmes respectively. The Bylaws provide the over-arching framework and specifications such as programme requirements, credit hours, maximum and minimum credits for awards, calculation of grade point calculation and other parameters required to develop a programme.

2.2   The guiding principles for the development of a new programme and changes to the existing programmes are described in the New Programme Development Policy and Procedures and the Monitoring and Review of Programme Policy. A new programme proposal must be aligned with the University's mission and Strategic Plan and also meet the expectations of the Kingdom of Bahrain's national agenda.

2.3   A need for a new programme is established through market research and feasibility study as well as broad consultations with internal and external stakeholders. The proposal is then presented to the College Curriculum Committee. Upon approval of the College Curriculum Committee, it is taken forward by the Programme Development Team with a designated Programme Team Lead assisted by the representative from the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Centre (QAAC). The review team found limited evidence of students' engagement in designing and approval of new programmes. Students' participation is found to be limited to the needs' analysis surveys. The involvement of student voice is further discussed in Standard 1.9.

2.4   At the College level, ASU has established Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) that provide necessary feedback and guidance from employers and the industry. These boards are responsible to assure that design and delivery of programmes is relevant to the needs of the relevant industry/profession. PABs include external experts and eminent members of society who provide necessary feedback on the design and delivery of new programmes. PABs meet on a regular basis.

2.5   Each programme specification has a curriculum skills mapping grid which provides a comprehensive mapping between Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) and Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs). The PILOs are divided into four categories: knowledge and understanding, subject-specific skills, critical thinking skills, and general and transferable skills. All CILOs are aligned with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level descriptors and mapped with PILOs.

2.6   All programmes at ASU are subject to internal quality assurance through the validation panel to ensure that all procedures are complied with at all stages of the new programme proposal. The panel consists of two members external to the proposing college, a subject matter expert and a member of the QAAC. The panel reviews all sections of the proposal including market research, physical and human resources, programme specifications, assessment methods and course specifications.

2.7   Final approvals for the new programme proposals are sought from the Board of Trustees after all conditions of the Validation Panel have been met. Subsequently, approval from the HEC is required before any new programme can be delivered.

2.8   Benchmarking against other programmes regarding content and standards is mandated in accordance with the Benchmarking Policy. The self-evaluation document (SED) provided examples of benchmarking exercises carried out for the programmes. In addition, Programme Advisory Boards within colleges provide advice and guidance from employers, industry and other key representatives of society.

2.9   Programme design and curricula of courses are also reviewed by independent external reviewers, which shows ASU's commitment to continuous improvement.

2.10   The internship is an integral part of academic programmes and it is one of the compulsory requirements guided by the Internship Policy. The SED included documentation about a mechanism of auditing of all aspects of internship provision for every programme by the QAAC.

2.11   ASU's Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) and the Quality Assurance Manual mandate that all programmes and courses have clear learning outcomes which reflect the progressive development of learner knowledge and skills and the use of appropriate teaching and assessment tools that accurately measure achievement of these learning outcomes. The sample of programmes and courses shared as part of the SED reveals that PILOs are at the correct NQF level and adequately mapped with NQF levels and CILOs.

2.12   All programmes are developed in compliance with the precepts and principles established by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), including fundamentals of NQF level and credit assigning, and mapping and confirmation panels and processes.

2.13   ASU offers four programmes in partnership with UK universities - two in collaboration with London South Bank University and the other two in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University. ASU assures that the qualifications are aligned with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) for determination of the level and the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS) for determination of credits. Transcripts provided to graduating students by ASU's partner universities state FHEQ level and CATS credits.

2.14   Any changes to a programme are guided by the Monitoring and Review of Programmes Policy. Changes to an individual course are also subject to scrutiny and approval processes based on rationale and justification.

2.15   The mission statement of ASU pledges to contribute towards sustainable development of community and society. The facilities available to students and staff help prepare students for active citizenship. There is a strong commitment towards research as it is one of the first three pillars of its strategy. The provision at ASU aligns closely with the Four Purposes of Higher Education as defined by the Council of Europe: preparation for sustainable employment; personal development; preparing students for active citizenship; creating a broad advanced knowledge base through stimulating research and innovation.

2.16   ASU's programmes have received the status of full confidence by the Education and Training Quality Authority of Bahrain (BQA). Moreover, ASU has achieved institutional listing on the NQF. The University also holds the accreditation of all of its programmes by the Higher Education Council (HEC) of Bahrain.

2.17   ASU's policies and procedures on programme design and approval sufficiently provide the framework and policy guidance on design and approval of new programmes. There is evidence that programme objectives are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes. Programmes are designed with stakeholder involvement. Programmes meet the national and international benchmarks and reflect the four purposes of Higher Education of the Council of Europe. Students are provided with internship opportunities that are closely reviewed and monitored. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.2: Design and approval of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.3   Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment

Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.

Findings

3.1   ASU's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) provides the overarching strategy for its teaching philosophy and articulates the learning, teaching, and assessment practices of the University. LTAS covers seven key areas namely: learners, curriculum, teaching methods, assessment and feedback, the learning environment, teachers, and quality. A linkage is established in the SED between ASU's Strategic Plan and the LTAS. The strategy aims to 'enable all students to have an excellent learning experience' and to help them to 'become confident, critical, creative, adaptable, articulate and aspiring graduates'.

3.2   The processes of implementation, monitoring, review and improvement of LTAS are carried out through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) led by the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Committee also oversees the enhancement of student experience and produces annual action plans for future activities.

3.3   In the self-evaluation document, ASU describes the student-centred approach in teaching and learning by placing learners at the centre of the learning and teaching process. During the interview with the review team, faculty confirmed that they employ a variety of student-centred pedagogical methods such as practical and work-based learning, projects, internship, theses and individual or group presentations, depending upon the course and its level. Students are provided opportunities to plan, manage and evaluate their own learning. Students are also engaged in several activities to ensure that they take responsibility from the beginning of their academic journey at the University and become independent learners.

3.4   The design of academic programmes requires that PILOs of all programmes are classified into four categories - knowledge, subject-specific skills, critical thinking and general and transferable skills. The courses in the programme are mapped to NQF levels 5 to 8. Students are required to be more independent and autonomous as they progress in the degree programme. Students are provided guidance and support from their teachers as they progress to more independent tasks such as capstone projects and research theses.

3.5   Students reported that the programmes are relevant and help them achieve their academic and employment goals. They receive support and academic advice throughout their academic journey at ASU. Alumni also stated that the University equipped them with the necessary skills required for the workplace.

3.6   ASU carries out a periodical evaluation of the pedagogical methods and delivery modes at the course and programme level. A Course Evaluation Report (CER) at the end of every semester is compiled that provides a summary of the achievement of learning outcomes and results of assessments. The course coordinator provides recommendations and actions for further improvement. At the programme level, the Annual Programme Review Report (APRR) takes into account a variety of data from different sources in order to suggest changes for the next year.

3.7   Assessments are appropriately designed and fairly applied in accordance with the Assessment, Moderation and Feedback Policy. A variety of formative and summative strategies are employed to ensure that all intended learning outcomes are covered. Assessment is carried out by appropriately qualified staff who are trained to undertake the

tasks. The content and assessment methods of each of the courses are aligned with the CILOs. ASU provides training to its staff to ensure assessments must be clear and at an appropriate level, underpinned by Bloom's Taxonomy. The assessments are mapped to cover the CILOs using a clear rubric and criteria.

3.8   Assessment criteria are shared with the learners in advance and published in relevant policies and the student handbook. Academic advisers are also required to guide students about the assessment criteria, among other matters, for academic success.

3.9   Moderation is carried out for the assessment instruments at the pre-assessment stage and the student achievement at the post-assessment stage. At the pre-assessment stage, moderation assures the clarity, relevance, level of difficulty and appropriateness of the marking scheme and at the post-assessment stage, moderation assures accuracy, fairness and consistency of marking. Moderation is compulsory for all mid-term and final term examinations at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Samples of pre and post moderation demonstrate the implementation of the policy.

3.10   In addition to internal moderation, external moderation is also carried out at a course level and a programme level. Course external moderators are subject matter experts who ensure that final assessments are designed at the correct level and mapped to intended learning outcomes. Programme external moderators are external experts who provide a comprehensive overview of the programme including assessment practices. The self-evaluation document included samples of external moderation at the course level and the programme level.

3.11   ASU organises several training and professional development activities for its faculty and staff. In order to keep the faculty abreast of the latest pedagogical methods, ASU has taken a number of initiatives such as the Higher Education Academy Fellowship HEA scheme, 'ASUrise scheme', launched by the University, leading to HEA fellowships. In addition, ASU holds the annual 'Crossing the Bridge Together' series, the annual Good Teaching Forum and yearly professional development activities for faculty and staff.

3.12   Students are provided opportunities to develop their independent and lifelong learning skills through the mandatory courses namely Capstone course, Entrepreneurship course and Internship course. The Capstone course is aimed to develop research and independent study skills. The Entrepreneurship course helps students develop transferable and entrepreneurial skills in a business setting as well as equip them for launching their own start-ups. The Internship course requires students to apply their knowledge and skills and demonstrate 'interpersonal' and 'self-reflective' skills in the workplace. In addition, the students are offered a set of relevant elective courses to meet the curriculum requirements.

3.13   Students are offered flexible learning opportunities and they are allowed to transfer from one programme to another within the University. Students from other universities are also able to transfer their credits as detailed in the Credit Transfer Policy and in accordance with the guidelines from the HEC of Bahrain.

3.14   The University maintains a register of student complaints with the Deanship of Students Affairs and the process to launch a complaint is articulated in the student handbook. Academic complaints and appeals on grades are forwarded to the Vice President of Academic Affairs and administrative matters are forwarded to the Vice President for Administration, Finance and Community engagement for further action. Students have the right for grade review that is mentioned in the appeals procedure and the student handbook. Students stated that their complaints and concerns are promptly addressed. They are provided multiple channels to reach the University such as emails, social media and through the Student Online System (SOS).

3.15   ASU's Bylaws and policies take into account mitigating circumstances and reasonable adjustments are made to accommodate such circumstances. In the event of a student missing the final exam owing to mitigating circumstances, the course status becomes 'incomplete' and the student can re-sit at the beginning of the following semester. Moreover, necessary accommodations are made for students with learning disabilities or requiring special needs during the examinations such as enlarged font size in the question paper, extra time, or extra space.

3.16   ASU recognises learner-teacher mutual respect by involving students in a variety of committees to seek their voice and concerns as well as allowing them to contribute to the decision-making process. Student feedback is also captured through a number of surveys throughout their journey at ASU. For students in the joint programmes, feedback is shared with the partner university and monitored through regular meetings. Analysis of the survey findings is shared with the respective colleges and departments and any actions resulting from the feedback are properly recorded and followed up by the Measurement and Evaluation Unit (MEU).

3.17   ASU's Policy for Students with Special Needs states that the special learning needs of students are addressed and proper support is available throughout their learning journey. All University services and provisions including the library are accessible by students with special needs. In addition, the principles of equality and fair treatment without any discrimination towards all students, faculty and staff is assured by relevant policies. Students with special needs are provided extra academic and physical support such as learning aids, private space, and extra examination time.

3.18   Faculty at ASU employs a variety of tools and software for teaching and learning, depending upon individual course specifications and desired outcomes. The teaching staff use the lesson plan template that contains the details of the content to be delivered and the teaching strategies and tools to be employed for the lesson. Lesson plans are submitted as part of the course portfolio to the Head of the Department and QAAC.

3.19   The start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 resulted in complete online teaching and learning operations across the University. Online teaching and learning is guided through e-Learning Policy. The University employed online software Moodle that facilitates access to the course materials, electronic resources, recorded classes, online class activities and assessment activities. Faculty received professional development and training in content design in the e-learning environment. For the academic year 2021-22, the University is using a blended approach in teaching and learning where classes are taught both in face-to-face and online synchronous mode, depending upon student needs and government regulations. The University took necessary precautions of social distancing and online delivery in the light of government regulations and instructions from the HEC.

3.20   ASU employed various surveys to monitor stakeholders' satisfaction with online learning. The e-learning practices adopted at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic have been reviewed by the Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) for compliance with the government regulations for the e-learning provision.

3.21   ASU policies cover the teaching and learning philosophy, methods of pedagogy and instruction, diversity, inclusion and equal opportunities for students. There is sufficient evidence that the processes are effective and the University provides student-centred learning opportunities for its students.

3.22   The University employs qualified staff who use a variety of teaching techniques to suit the learners' needs. ASU follows the conventions of assessments and assures that these are published and aligned with the learning outcomes. Processes of moderation are imbedded for all major assessments and this assures the integrity of assessments.

Therefore, the team concludes that Standard 1.3: Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment is **met**.

Standard 1.4   Student admission, progression, recognition and certification

Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life cycle', e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.

Findings

4.1   The ASU Bylaws are supported by a range of policies which are relevant to various stages and phases of a student life cycle such as:

- Student Application Guide
- Admissions Registration Manual
- Credit Transfer policy
- Students with Special Needs
- Students at Risk
- Collection, Fees, and Refund policy
- Benchmarking policy
- Academic Advising policy
- Assessment, Moderation, and Feedback Policy.

4.2   ASU has a policy for Development and Review of Policies and Procedures, which states that ASU policies are reviewed every two years. The policy review database provides an overview of the ongoing review activity of ASU policies. However, some policies such as Academic Advising Policy, Benchmarking Policy, and Students at Risk Policy do not appear to have been reviewed in line with the two-year process as ASU records the date of changes made to the policies. The review team concluded that ASU should strictly follow its policy to review policies and other key documents on a two-year cycle. This led to a recommendation under Standard 1.1.

4.3   Equality and Diversity Policy covers internal and external stakeholders, sets out types of discrimination, and defines protected characteristics. The policy applies to all stakeholders and refers to associated policies and procedures. The policy states the responsibilities of individuals, departments, and colleges and includes a complaints procedure.

4.4   The ASU Policy for Students with Special Needs makes provision for students who meet the admissions criteria to be accommodated without posing undue hardship to ASU or other students. The Admissions and Registration Manual also refers to this policy. The ASU Policy for Students with Special Needs identifies:

- types of disability that affect student progress and wellbeing
- key responsibilities of staff and students
- kinds of support the University is able to provide
- the application process for assistance or guidance from the University.

4.5   Student progression is monitored through data collected by ASU and managed through its information management systems. The performance and progression of students is monitored to ensure appropriate support is received. The Students at Risk Policy outlines how to support and monitor student progression to enable early intervention where required. The policy is supported by an automated process in SIS, an Orientation and Advising Unit, and academic staff designated as academic advisers. The Students at Risk Policy states the responsibilities of students, staff, and departments in monitoring student progression. It sets out the processes and actions pre-defined to support students, and a grade-average

threshold which trigger students being classified as at risk. An example report from 2010-21 was submitted as evidence of reporting on students flagged as being at risk.

4.6   The Academic Advising Policy states the responsibilities of academic advisers and the procedure for advising students. It also contains a procedure for advising students at risk. The College Advisory Committee is mentioned in the policy. Its role is to evaluate advisers. According to the policy, students also evaluate advisers at the end of each academic year.

4.7   The team accessed the academic advisory overview page within the Academic Advising system. The Student Satisfaction Survey is completed through this system and includes a question regarding whether 'My Academic Advisor is supportive and meets my needs'. Survey reports are prepared by QAAC and discussed at the Student Experience Committee.

4.8   The ASU Assessment, Moderation, and Feedback Policy is comprehensive with definition, procedures, processes, templates, and a breakdown of principles for assessment, moderation, and feedback with guidance for implementation. The Directorate of Admissions and Registration receives a mark-sheet which is signed at the relevant stages of the process to confirm completion. Course Evaluation Reports and Annual Programme Review Reports track students' progression, feedback, actions, and recommendations year-on-year.

4.9   Monitoring of students with special needs is done through a register that categorises the special need, adjustment, and student number. Regular meetings are held with students to identify progression and support needs. Progression is also monitored through the study plans detailing progression course-by-course and year-on-year.

4.10   The ASU admissions process aligns with the HEC guidance on admission of students and is consistent with the procedures adopted by other providers in Bahrain. The HEC directives include overall student numbers and quotas.

4.11   The University Bylaws contain the general entry requirements, credits hours, credit transfers, attendance requirements, but not information on academic integrity.

4.12   The application assessment process is collaborative between the Directorate of Admissions and Registration and the colleges. In addition to an interview, the Directorate staff review the application form and evidence.

4.13   The SED states that the Directorate of Admission and Registration and colleges assess an applicant's suitability against the entry criteria for each programme. Applicants are assessed individually and in accordance with the ASU Equality and Diversity Policy.

4.14   The Directorate of Admissions and Registration works with the Directorate of Administration and Finance to determine the allocation of quotas across all programmes and monitor admissions, ensuring the staff/student ratios mandated by HEC are observed and that the physical resources available are appropriate.

4.15   The Student Application Guide and the Admission and Registration Manual contain the procedure for admission. Both state information on admission requirements, credit transfers, steps in the process and documents required for applications.

4.16   The Directorate of Admission and Registration maintains a database of all programme-related enquiries. Enquiries can be made via telephone, email, or the website 'contact us' function. Students described how they had been supported by ASU as prospective candidates through their application process.

4.17　　The Admissions and Registration Manual is aligned with the University's mission and Equality and Diversity Policy to offer admission to competent students from the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Gulf region, and beyond, irrespective of social, racial, and financial background. The Admissions and Registration Manual states ASU internal and external responsibilities and reporting relevant from admission to graduation, as well as ministerial and government reporting. The Admission and Registration Manual states the process and requirements for graduating and certificates awarded as a cumulative achieving of their degree, and GPA required to successfully progress or complete a programme. The Admissions and Registration Manual is available internally and states the responsibilities including reporting and data internally, externally and to government agencies.

4.18　　ASU reviews its admissions policy and criteria at least every four years which involves College and Department Councils, as well as Programme Advisory Boards (PABs) that have alumni and employer members and is the responsibility of the University Council.

4.19　　The Student Application Guide provides information on minimum entry requirements for admission, required documentation, and fee structure for both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and information on financial support. It also provides specific guidance to admission of students with special needs and refers to relevant admissions procedures as set out in the Admissions and Registration Manual, including the procedures for admission, transferring credits (internally and externally), admission appeals, and credit transfer appeals. The admissions policy also states the criteria for admission and the documents needed for applications and transfers.

4.20　　Information on fees is available on the website and in the Student Application Guide. There is a link on the website to the Collection, Fees, and Refund Policy. This information is also supported by the ASU Bylaws for undergraduate and postgraduate study.

4.21　　Students described how ASU had provided a supportive and thorough induction, even during the pandemic. They also mentioned that support was ongoing, and inductions were provided where relevant during their degrees. Open days have continued as virtual events during the pandemic.

4.22　　One piece of information the review team found not to be clear is the programme specific entry requirements. For example, the Student Application Guide refers readers to the website or Directorate of Admission and Registration for entry requirements specific to British programmes. When clicking on the links to these programmes, entry requirements are not included in the information provided. The BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance link with Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU) shows a pdf of programme information and entry requirements but this is for the AY 2017-18. The link to the other CMU programme links to the website not the pdf. The University Prospectus mentions prerequisite courses needed to enrol on modules but not the ASU or programme-specific entry requirements.

4.23　　As stated in the SED and staff meeting, programme-specific entry requirements are outlined in the college-level programme handbooks. College and programme handbooks, available on the ASU website and the student portal, were cited by students, academic, and support services staff as a central point of information for students. However, when the review team consulted programme handbooks, inconsistency in presenting programme information was identified, including programme-specific entry requirements:

- The Programme Handbook for College of Administrative Sciences mentioned programme-specific requirements for two programmes. Both are CMU programmes. This handbook has: programme structure; programme specifications; ILOs; list of courses and course descriptions; future careers.

- The Programme Handbook for College of Creative Arts and Science includes admission criteria specific to each programme. This handbook has: programme specifications; ILOs: programme structure; future careers; and list of courses and course descriptions.

- The Programme Handbook for College of Law contains the University Bylaws for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. Within these the University entry requirements are stated but not programme-specific entry requirements. This handbook has: programme specifications; ILOs; programme structure; and list of courses and course descriptions.

- The Programme Handbook for College of Engineering provides various information which is not seen in the other programme handbooks, but it does not contain University or programme-specific entry requirements. This handbook has: programme specifications; ILOs: programme structure; future careers; and a list of courses and course descriptions.

4.24   The review team therefore **recommends** that ASU presents programme-specific entry requirements in a more consistent manner.

4.25   The SED states ownership of the Student Information System (SIS) and oversight of all student records and data is with the Directorate of Admissions and Registration. SIS supports enquiry and reporting requirements of ASU management, academic staff, and students. It provides reporting on planning, oversight, academic monitoring and intervention, self-service facilities for students, and links to the ASU accounting system for fee payments. Information, Communication, Technology & Knowledge Management department (ICT&KM) is responsible for security, planning and implementation of SIS. The tour of online systems demonstrated that ASU has a robust system for collecting and monitoring data on staff and students.

4.26   ASU enrolment data captures the average graduation rate year-on-year, showing the average with and without transferred students. Student retention data is also collected. Staff data was also submitted.

4.27   The SED states that procedures for administration of assessment are delegated to the Academic Standards and Examination Committee within each college. The ASU Bylaws also include information on qualifications, periods of study, progression, and completion.

4.28   ASU ensures the integrity of its processes for issuing its certificates through a combination of manual and automated steps which are set out in the Admission and Registration Manual. Course marks are entered after assessments and verified by staff in the Department of Registration before graduation. Verification is done through reviewing transcripts and manually calculating the cumulative GPA, which is verified against the SIS-calculated GPA. These are then sent to respective departments for verification and approval by the department and college council. Lists are then presented to the University Council for official approval. Certificates are signed by the designated member of Admissions and Registration, the relevant Dean, and the University President. Certificates are sent to HEC for final approval and, when returned, students may collect them.

4.29   Final grades and transcripts are issued as described in the Admission and Registration Manual.

4.30   Recent enhancements to SIS include the read-only mode which enables UK partners to access student records on the programmes which are validated by UK partners. Future enhancements include recording of incomplete exam grades and changes resulting from appeals.

4.31   The QA Manual sets out the quality management process for reviewing and ensuring the integrity of learner records and certification, which is also part of the ASU Quality Management System. QAAC periodically conducts quality audits of the process which involves ICT&KM and Directorate of Admission and Registration manuals, policies and procedures, a January 2019 audit report, audit action plan, and action plan follow up.

4.32   The ASU Bylaws are predefined, published internally, and consistently applied across the institution and cover all phases of the student lifecycle. The ASU Bylaws are supported by policies that focus on aspects of student experience such as equality and diversity, special needs, students becoming at risk who need academic or non-academic support, and fees. In addition to the policies and procedures, ASU has internal systems that support the collection and monitoring of student-related data. This data is used to support students through their degree programmes and wider skills development as future graduates. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.4: Student admission, progression, recognition and certification is **met**.

Standard 1.5   Teaching staff

Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.

Findings

5.1   ASU has established Bylaws, policies and procedures for recruitment, appointment, evaluation and promotion of faculty and staff in accordance with the laws and regulations set forth by HEC. For recruitment of faculty and staff, the human resources department identifies suitable candidates and shares CVs with the relevant college dean or director of a department. A specialised committee is formed by the Dean of College or the director of the department to screen the candidates for an interview. The HR department arranges the interview and the outcome is discussed at the relevant HR committee. For academic staff appointments, the HR committee consists of the Vice President of Administration, Finance and Community Engagement as Chair and Vice President of Academic Affairs and Director of Administration and Finance as members. The HR committee for the administrative staff appointments consists of Vice President for Administration, Finance and Community Engagement as the Chair, the Director of Administration and Finance and the Head of the Human Resources Department as members. The committee recommends the candidates to the President of the University who has overall authority for the appointment of faculty and staff - 81% of the academic staff at ASU have a doctorate-level qualification and administrative staff also hold qualifications as stated in the job description for the roles.

5.2   All academic and administrative positions in the University have job descriptions with well-articulated roles and responsibilities. Job descriptions and expectations for all academic and administrative positions are stated in the Job Description Handbook.

5.3   All newly-recruited employees receive onboarding and induction by HR. A typical induction day covers awareness sessions on the topics such as employees' roles and responsibilities, health and safety information, information technology support, e-learning tools, library services and finance. Academic faculty receive a further induction at the college level by the Head of Department. Each faculty is assigned a mentor from the same academic specialisation for ongoing assistance and support during the early days of employment. All employees have access to the staff handbook that describes policies and procedures governing their rights and responsibilities throughout their time at the University.

5.4   Both academic and administrative employees are appraised through an electronic system. ASU has relevant policies and procedures for staff appraisal and evaluation that are linked with the University's Strategic Plan. The staff handbook includes detailed attributes required for appraisal with percentage allocation to each of the attributes for both administrative and academic staff. The criteria for academic staff appraisal include the evaluation of assigned tasks, rapport with students, the effectiveness of teaching as well as community engagement and research outcomes.

5.5   Academic promotion to the next rank is handled through three committees - departmental promotion committee, college promotion committee and university promotion committee. ASU has comprehensive policies and procedures for the promotion of academic faculty and these are fairly implemented.

5.6   The provision of staff development is governed by two staff development policies one each for academic and administrative staff respectively. The Vice President of Academic Affairs oversees the Academic Staff Development Unit (ASDU) that is responsible for offering professional development activities to the academic staff.

5.7   At the beginning of each academic year HR, in collaboration with ASDU, carries out a training needs analysis based on data compiled through different tools such as annual appraisals, student evaluations and peer observations. Based on the results, ASDU organises staff development activities through seminars, workshops and training courses for pedagogy, research and e-learning. ASU has allocated 2% of its gross income towards staff development as required by the Higher Education Commission of the Kingdom of Bahrain and 91 training events were organised in the academic year 2020-21 with 100% attendance by the academic staff. ASU has partnered with Advance HE to offer a fellowship scheme for its academic staff to recognise excellence in teaching and learning and student support. Currently, 91 out of 119 academic staff have achieved 109 certifications at different levels of fellowships. The review team found this feature contributing to the **good practice** under Standard 1.5: Teaching staff.

5.8   ASU has formalised the evaluation and analysis of training activities. It regularly uses the results to improve its provision.

5.9   ASU has developed required policies and processes for both academic and administrative staff to enable a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. The process of academic and administrative staff recruitment is clear and assures fairness and transparency. There is evidence of opportunities for staff professional development and training. Processes for staff evaluation and promotion are in place. A significant number of academic staff have achieved HEA fellowship and certifications. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.5: Teaching staff is **met**.

Standard 1.6 Learning resources and student support

Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.

Findings

6.1 The SED describes faculties as fully equipped and designed to meet the needs of users and meet qualitative specifications. Technology is available in all teaching rooms and laboratories as required by teaching activities taking place. Social and study space is provided on each floor. Lecture theatre and auditoriums are available for teaching and conferences. Facilities include various labs, including language, computer, and engineering labs. Workshops and studios for design, specialised science laboratories, and a mock trial room are also available. Students can work in the labs outside of teaching hours. Technical staff are available during this time to support students and ensure proper maintenance of the laboratories. Students have access to recreational spaces with games and a cafeteria. Contracts are agreed with external clubs to provide students with sports facilities such as indoor soccer and basketball. External contracts are a temporary measure until construction of the ASU Advanced Sporting and Recreational Facilities are complete. The campus is accessible for those with limited or reduced mobility. Faculty are provided with stationery and laptop computers. A virtual tour of the campus is provided.

6.2 The ASU Strategic Management Policy includes a template for Operational Plans (OPs). The template used for both Library and ICT&KM evidence examples is similar to the one in the policy but not identical.

6.3 The New Programme Development Policy and Procedures requires consultation with academic and support staff and external stakeholders but does not mention students as a relevant stakeholder.

6.4 'Validation criteria for consideration by Panel' mentions 'the resources available to the programme (including staffing and staff development'. There is a section in the template that includes a resource implication point and a subsequent point requiring the confirmation of department consultation and endorsement. Intended learning outcomes and assessment and programme design are also considered in the template.

6.5 The Facilities Management Committee TOR specifies that the committee has oversight of physical and technological infrastructures of ASU. There is no mention of emergency response or responsibilities or monitoring of 'all support and maintenance procedures' related to infrastructure and facilities of ASU.

6.6 The Health and Safety Policy is part of the staff and student inductions. The policy mentions staff and student safety but only includes the responsibilities of staff.

6.7 Students described the active working relationship between support services and the student council. The student council functions as a liaison between ASU and the wider student body. Staff and students gave examples of changes made to the cafeteria and establishing a mini market.

6.8 The Decision Support System (DSS) figures provided staff and student use of facilities and resources. ASU has high-level data on ASU KPIs, academic staff and students which is used in decision-making at strategic, committee and department level.

6.9 Through the Student Information System (SIS), students have access to information regarding their programme of study, including grades and warnings.

6.10   The timetabling process for classes and exams is managed and conducted by the Directorate of Admissions and Registration, the colleges, and academic departments. The process is in line with the Equality and Diversity Policy.

6.11   SIS uses data on student eligibility for courses based on the prerequisites defined by ASU. Prerequisites support students in their academic progress through degree programmes. Timetables received from colleges are reviewed by the Directorate of Admissions and Registration to ensure equal opportunity for students. Once approved, timetables and exam dates are entered into SIS and added to the academic calendar. Students can register for courses through SIS, a process which is described in the Admissions and Registration Manual.

6.12   Orientation is supported by an Orientation Package on the website, New Student Orientation Guideline, and an Orientation Day extract which demonstrate the orientation and induction activities described by staff and students. Student orientation and staff induction included a short presentations from a range of services. The SED states that a staff induction is conducted by the library.

6.13   ASU New Student Orientation Guidelines were established to support students at every stage of their education. Attendance is compulsory at the start of their programme and designed to support the transition from school or another provider. It requires students to be made aware of expectations and regulations which apply to them as students. The student handbook makes reference to bylaws and orientation. An extract and pictures from the Orientation Day and newsletter addressed from the ASU President describes Orientation Day. There is an orientation day survey and form specific to students with special needs. The student club form records which clubs students would like to join.

6.14   The student council represents the student voice on University committees, acts as a liaison, and organises student clubs and activities. All students can propose and organise events which are reviewed by the Deanship of Student Affairs. Announcements for events are facilitated through SMS, emails, social media, and display screens across campus. There are currently six student clubs. The health and safety policy is considered alongside events. For events outside the Kingdom of Bahrain a standard checklist is applied.

6.15   Minutes from the Student Experience Committee are provided as evidence that student members are able to comment on any aspects of student life and feed back on directorate services.

6.16   Student membership on committees is as follows: University Council: Student Council President; College Council: Student representative (non-voting); Department Council: Student representative (1) elected; University Learning, Teaching, and Assessment Committee: Student representative (nominated by the student council) non-voting; Student Experience Committee: two members from the student council.

6.17   Social events are organised by the Deanship of Student Affairs, Student services Office, with staff and student council input. The Community Engagement and the Deanship of Students also organise events with external organisations. The London Day event was designed to promote cultural awareness.

6.18   The newly-elected members of ASU student council have an introduction to the Chairman of the Board and the University President. The student council meets with senior management and the University President. The Alumni Club has an introductory meeting with senior management and University President.

6.19   To ensure the appropriateness and quality of library services and learning resources, the library collects feedback through a range of surveys including the ASU

Student Satisfaction Survey, Exit Survey for Graduating Students, and the Library Survey. The latter is for both students and staff and all three surveys have analysis reports and action plans as outcomes.

6.20   Staff and student satisfaction with ASU infrastructure is monitored by the Procurement and Logistics (PaLs) Department through surveys and the student experience committee. The Exit Survey includes eight questions on facilities and support. The Student Satisfaction Survey contains 11 (out of 18) questions on facilities and services. The Student Experience Committee TOR include improvement of facilities and the learning environment at ASU as well as analysing feedback and reporting back to students.

6.21   An annual PaLs feedback form for employee feedback and satisfaction with services is measured. The minutes provided to demonstrate that PaLs survey data is discussed at the Facilities Management Committee do not include any reference in agenda or minutes to the PaLs survey.

6.22   The SED states that the Library and Learning Resources Committee (LLRC) is a forum for feedback and discussion of services which ensures that the areas of improvement and enhancement can be identified and implemented. Although the TOR do not clearly state the committee is responsible for discussion of feedback and further actions, the LLRC minutes show agenda items for resources related to learning, IT and library. It is responsible for ensuring policies are adhered to.

6.23   The ASU Student Satisfaction Survey includes Q11 'ICT meets my needs' and the Exit Survey for Graduating Students has a section on facilities: Q23 'the general IT services and resources were available when I needed them'. Analysis is provided per college per question. The overall scored in these surveys were positive.

6.24   The library conducts a student satisfaction survey and participates in international surveys. The Library Survey is for both students and staff.

6.25   Committees such as the Library and Learning Resources Committee and the Student Experience Committee act as fora for discussion of feedback. The latter has student members to provide feedback on student life and feedback.

6.26   The SED states that the New Students Experience survey includes questions on the ICT&KM provision. Section 3. 9 states: 'I am satisfied that the university provides me with adequate facilities and services to allow me to complete the programme'.

6.27   Student support services at ASU cover pastoral guidance, assistance with problems, specific needs, and promotion of social events. The Student Affairs Bylaw under the Student Services office does not mention financial advice and support as specified in the SED.

6.28   The Career Development and Alumni Affairs office supports current students through advice and guidance, and various events such as job fairs all focused on preparing graduates for labour market demand. Graduates are also supported to find jobs. Students described the support available from the Careers Team to the review team at the visit.

6.29   The Academic Advising Policy states the responsibilities of academic advisers and procedure for advising students. Further information on this policy can be found in standards 1.4.

6.30   The ASU policy for Students with Special Needs makes reasonable accommodations for students who meet the admission requirements and have special needs or a disability. Further information is also provided in the Student Application Guide. The

application guide makes very brief reference to the policy. The admission procedure in the Admission and Registration Manual provides information on the process for students with special needs who are applying to ASU.

6.31   The SED states that the Deanship of Student Affairs takes steps to encourage students to declare existing disabilities or special needs which can be recorded through the Special Needs form. Emails are sent to all students as a reminder to declare special needs or disabilities. Students who have declared a special need or disability have a customised icon in the SOS which enables their requests, complaints, or suggestions to be handled as a priority. Colleges are provided with lists of students with disabilities or special needs and evidence of midterm extensions for certain students has been submitted.

6.32   In line with the Library Policy for Students with Special Needs, there are special gates and lifts for access, as well as a special PC screen for students with visual impairment.

6.33   The Students at Risk Policy supports and monitors student progression to enable early intervention where required. Further information on this policy can be found under Standard 1.4.

6.34   The library is established under the Library Bylaw which details its services and operational aspects. The Library Bylaws are supported by the Library Policy which also includes process and guidance on physical and virtual facilities, budget, resource and operational matters.

6.35   Staff and students have access to a wide variety of physical and electronic academic e-resources and databases. E-learning facilities include Moodle and Turnitin anti-plagiarism software. The English Language Resource Centre provides learning and self-study materials to students. Strategic KPIs for the Centre show as completed in the strategy implementation report.

6.36   The library is compliant with HEC regulations. The Library Bylaw and the Library Policy do not detail any information or process regarding the review and assurance of resources and services being fit-for-purpose.

6.37   The operation of the library is directed and monitored by the Library and Learning Resource Committee (LLRC). Only staff are members of the committee and there is no mention of stakeholder engagement or involvement in the TOR.

6.38   The IT, Communications and Technology department (ICT) was established under the ICT&KM Bylaw which sets out its objectives and reporting responsibilities. ICT's remit is further detailed in the ICT&KM Policy and Procedures. Monitoring of ICT is done by LLRC, which reviews its overall policy and implementation plans for information resources, equipment, classrooms, offices, and library, and makes budgetary recommendations.

6.39   LLRC provides feedback received through surveys to ICT on services and support within its remit. An example of enhancement arising from feedback is the use of information stickers that provide the phone number to the IT help-desk.

6.40   IT facilities are planned to ensure needs of various students are met, including those with mobility difficulties. During open hours, ICT also provides advice regarding the customisable features of software which may be appropriate for students and staff with visual impairment.

6.41   There is an integrated Health Clinic on campus, which is staffed by one full-time and one part-time nurse, has various medical devices, services, and medicines. First-aid

boxes are located on each floor of the academic building, administrative building, and the technology building.

6.42   HEC requirements state that both the Health Clinic and supervisor for Health and Safety prepare periodic reports which are submitted to the Facilities Management Committee. The reports highlight measures taken, development and improvement of mechanisms. Pictures show staff engaging in organised exercises and the annual health day for staff and students.

6.43   During COVID, ASU has implemented national guidelines. All teaching operations moved online with part-time attendance on campus for staff. The University President chairs a COVID-19 Committee. There is a section of the ASU website which provides information on the COVID committee and membership, FAQs, links to guidelines, media, and phone numbers and links in relation to online student services. An action from minutes provided was to update the website with a COVID section.

6.44   Other actions included updating the staff and student handbooks with COVID guidance. The student handbook guides students to follow updates on the ASU website and provides phone numbers for various services. The staff handbook provided did not include information on COVID. Updating handbooks with COVID guidance was an action arising from the COVID committee.

6.45   The New Programme Development Policy specifies a broad discussion of new programme proposals among staff who will directly contribute to the design and development of the programme. Resources are mentioned as criteria for the validation panel, and documentation for student orientation and support. When seeking HEC/GDQ approval a budget is required, which may include resources. Section 4 in the proposal pro forma considers resource implications (human and physical).

6.46   The New Programme Development Policy requires information on library resources which a new programme will need and this must be endorsed by the LLRC to ensure the library is involved and resources are considered. Requests may be made by staff and students for materials and resources needed for existing programmes and this is considered and approved by the 'Director'. Requests are made with the Book Order Form.

6.47   The SOS enables students to submit queries and complaints directly and any feedback on the library is shared with the Director of Library.

6.48   The library is subject to periodic audits conducted by the QAAC. An audit report and supporting action plan are the outcomes of the audit. An example of audit responses is finding no 5 - that the library does not conduct informative workshops for either students or staff; the action plan states that there were workshops organised at the end of each semester. These include a plagiarism workshop for staff, how to use databases for staff and students, and a workshop for students on the important role they have in improving the holdings of the library.

6.49   Audit report finding no 20: 'The library uses the percentage of users' satisfaction as an indicator on efficiency and effectiveness of the library services', and the recommendation 'The library should conduct a comprehensive study to measure efficiency and effectiveness of the library services (using all available tools and methods in addition to surveys)'. The action plan records actions as 'collect DB usage; Generate Borrowing reports; and Collect Library usage'.

6.50   Audit report finding no 13: The library receives students' suggestions by email or letter, was found compliant and had a recommendation: 'mechanisms for suggestions should be in place for both students and staff using standard suggestion form. The library should

maintain a record showing user suggestions and actions taken'. The action plan specifies a suggestion form for books.

6.51   The library prepares an annual operational plan (OP), from which progress updates are made at the end of each semester. OP progress updates form part of the ASU Strategic Implementation Report. The operational plan is dated March 2018 and the ASU strategy update is for 2020-21 and published in July 2021. The library OP collates the college-level OPs and these are required to consider resources such as books, reference materials, and journals.

6.52   ICT&KM Audit action plan dates 31 March 2019, following the February audit. The item number of the audit report is recorded against each recommendation and action. As per ICT&KM policy, a record of hardware and software is maintained in an ICT Directorate register.

6.53   The staff induction programme includes ICT&KM and student inductions. A distinction is made between students and staff in terms of ICT inductions. Staff have a dedicated day for hands-on training session whereas students are offered induction sessions each semester.

6.54   The ICT&KM OP demonstrated budget allocations for areas such as new resources, software development, and training for staff. ICT&KM report progress which feeds into the ASU Strategy Implementation Report. This covers survey analysis and findings, enhancement of e-resource usage, staff and student training.

6.55   The ASU Job Description Handbook 2020-21 edition contains a comprehensive list of job descriptions for roles at all levels of ASU. The Employee Evaluation Policy aims to standardise the evaluation process of employees and ensure transparency. The policy sets out the University approach to appraisals of all staff and includes recommendations for training and development as part of the process.

6.56   The ASU Staff Development Policy (academic) and the list of policies notes a Staff Development Policy (administrative). Staff development is overseen by the HR department and the policy states the responsibilities for the Academic Staff Development Unit, the Training, Development and Continuous Education Centre, and other relevant personnel. HR develops a report on the training needs which have arisen from the appraisals, and these are recorded and assigned in a training calendar.

6.57   To ensure effectiveness of the training provided, staff complete an evaluation form and line managers are required to respond to a Post Training Performance Monitoring form and analysis provided by the Training, Development, and Continuous Education Centre.

6.58   ASU has a wide range of accessible learning resources and support. It has processes for monitoring and reviewing resources and activities, both academic and non-academic. Students are able to provide feedback and suggestions through surveys and the student council. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.6: Learning resources and student support is **met**.

Standard 1.7   Information management

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.

Findings

7.1   ASU has a comprehensive package of IT tools that allows the collection and storage of a wide range of management information, together with the capacity to analyse and display the information to inform strategic and operational decision making. The principal tools are as follows.

7.2   Senior managers, including those with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement have access to a KPI Dashboard that displays progress with the institution's key performance indicators (KPIs) together with the agreed targets and any risk associated with failure to achieve the targets. There is a Decision Support Tool that collects and displays data from a broad and diverse set of sources that includes IT resource utilisation, the current proportion of academic staff that hold a doctoral degree, and the nationality of students. Annual Operational Plans for each of the University's management units are available through another tool, together with where the responsibility lies for each part of the plan. Any progress made towards achieving the plan is included, together with the evidence that the progress is real. A workflow-based appraisal system steers line managers and their staff through the annual appraisal process.

7.3   Academic staff have access to a Student Information System that records entry information, courses attended, grades, academic advising, master's student supervision, and attendance statistics. There is a specific module for alerting teachers of students who may be experiencing problems and attendance monitoring.

7.4   The institution's VLE, Moodle, is fully integrated with the Student Information System, the email system, and Turnitin plagiarism-detecting software. All information on the VLE is archived for two years. BigBlueButton is a synchronous online teaching package that was heavily used during the COVID-19 pandemic, together with MS Teams and Zoom. Teaching staff also have access to a Moderation Tool, an E-Course Portfolio, and the E-library.

7.5   There is a Student Online Services tool that enables students to carry out a number of functions, including recording any special needs, making a complaint, providing praise and thanks, and printing their student curriculum vitae. This tool is also used to harvest management information, such as anonymised usage statistics for student support services and student health services. A student portal, accessed through the University website, provides students with access to key documents. During the COVID-19 pandemic, a campus management tool was established to allow students to seek permission to come onto campus. Students who have completed their studies at ASU have access to an alumni tool campus.

7.6   Some IT tools are available to all staff. These include Human Resource Services, which allow all functions to be completed online, the ASU Knowledge Hub that hosts policies, manuals and other formal documents, the ASU Survey System that builds and runs surveys, and a Procurement System.

7.7   The ASU Strategic Plan lists appropriate KPIs under each strategic objective. The KPI Dashboard, available to senior managers, monitors and displays progress with these

indicators against benchmarks. University Council receives and considers progress reports on the implementation of the strategic plan and achievement of the KPIs.

7.8   The Strategic Planning and Risk Management Committee, chaired by the Chair of the Board of Trustees and with a membership comprising the President and Vice Presidents, the Director of Administration and Finance, and the Head of the Governance and Strategic Planning Unit, has responsibility for determining and gathering the University's KPIs on a regular basis, and ensuring that both University Council and the Board of Trustees are informed of the extent to which these are being achieved. Minutes of the Strategic Planning and Risk Management Committee reveal that implementation of the strategy, as revealed by the KPI Dashboard, is a regular agenda item at its meetings.

7.9   The remit of the University Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee includes responsibility for reviewing and reporting on the KPIs for Teaching, Learning and Assessment. Minutes of the committee reveal it discharging this responsibility effectively. The Research and Innovation and Research Ethics Committee has the corresponding role for KPIs relevant to research.

7.10   The Annual Programme Review process explicitly requires the Programme Director to identify, analyse, and consider the implications of changes in the student profile (gender, nationality, entry qualifications), progression and completion rates, pass rates, degree classifications, and feedback from employers. The Programme Director accesses the relevant data via the Student Information System. This data is also available to senior managers through the Decision Support Tool, which draws on a wide range of data sources, including the Student Information System.

7.11   The Student Information System contains information on student progression, achievement and completion rates. The data is required for the Annual Programme Review Report in which the Programme Director identifies and analyses any trends in quantitative student performance data. The list of data considered during the APRR process includes number of applications, intake numbers, gender distribution, age distribution, country of domicile distribution, entry qualification distribution, and student achievement focusing on student progression and award information.

7.12   Monitoring and evaluating the student experience at ASU is the responsibility of the Student Experience Committee. The committee includes two members from the Student Council. In addition to metrics from the institution's management information systems, the committee receives and discusses the results of surveys conducted to gauge the student experience. Minutes of the committee include numerous examples of actions taken in response to student feedback.

7.13   The University's approach to surveys is described in the Quality Assurance Manual. This includes details of the process for preparing surveys, collecting the responses, analysing and interpreting the data, using the findings to generate an improvement plan, and monitoring action to carry out the plan.

7.14   The list of surveys includes the New Students' Experience Survey that gathers feedback from new and transfer students on their first semester experience in the University, the Course Evaluation Survey that takes place at the completion of each course, the Student Satisfaction Survey that covers the University's student-facing services, the Exit Survey for Graduating Students that gathers the perceptions of the senior students on several aspects of their university life, the Alumni Satisfaction Survey, the E-Learning Student Satisfaction Survey, and the Thesis Course Evaluation Survey for master's students. There is also a survey that asks employers to evaluate ASU graduates that is designed to assess the degree of confidence that employers have on the alumni of the University in relation to the graduates' skills and preparation for work.

7.15   The Measurement and Evaluation Unit is responsible for collating, analysing, and interpreting all survey data and making the results available to the colleges, departments and units, together with the quantitative data required for the Annual Programme Review Report process.

7.16   The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee carries institutional-level responsibility for overseeing the analysis of all reports related to teaching and learning including student surveys, alumni surveys, faculty staff survey, and for advising upon issues and trends emerging from these surveys.

7.17   The University requires the appropriate unit to respond to issues raised by the surveys by the creation of an Improvement Plan, and to provide feedback to the students on any action undertaken. Examples of Improvement Plans arising from student feedback received through surveys were provided and further examples of improvements arising from student feedback were provided by students and in the SED. Minutes of the Student Experience Committee show consideration of surveys and report action to address student concerns.

7.18   Feedback on the learning resources and student support is sought through the surveys listed above, together with staff surveys. Students are able to complain about poor service, or to praise excellent service through the Student Online Services tool.

7.19   The career paths of graduates are monitored through the Alumni Satisfaction Survey, and through the Career Development and Alumni Services Office that communicates with alumni and keeps their contact details updated. The University offers skills development opportunities to its graduates.

7.20   As described above, a wide range of information-collecting methods is employed, including surveys of students, staff and other stakeholders, student demographics, performance and destination data, social media messaging and automated collection of attendance and facility usage data.

7.21   Students and staff are involved in analysing the information and planning follow up by representation on a number of key committees, including University Council, Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee, Student Experience Committee, college councils and student council.

7.22   The review team identified the University's IT systems that integrate databases and other sources of information allowing accessibility of data and the embedding of management information into decision-making processes at all levels of the institution as **good practice**.

7.23   ASU claims that it has 'a well-established culture of quality and continuous improvement by the collection and review of information to ensure that accurate information is available for sound decision-making by the management'. This claim is borne out by the documentary evidence supplied and by the meetings with staff and students. Therefore, the review team concludes that Standard 1.7: Information management is **met**.

Standard 1.8   Public information

Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.

Findings

8.1   The University Prospectus provides information on compulsory and elective modules at University and College level. Programme-specific modules for each degree programme are listed and detail any prerequisites where relevant to modules.

8.2   The Student Application Guide provides information on various policies relevant to student applications, such as admissions policy, transfer policy, special needs policy, fees and financial support.

8.3   The Programme Brochure is about the LSBU partnership. The LSBU programme brochure is not dated and not available on the ASU website. A similar programme brochure with 2016-17 dates was found on the ASU website for degrees offered in partnership with Cardiff Metropolitan University.

8.4   The ASU student handbook provides a comprehensive overview of policy, procedures and regulations relevant to students. College-specific programme handbooks for College of Administrative Sciences and College of Creative Arts and Sciences are different in style and information provision.

8.5   Samples of social media accounts and TV broadcasts are provided. On the website, two videos provided clear information about certain programmes and foundation year, requirements, and further information.

8.6   Information for current students regarding news and events is disseminated through email, social media, and text message. Communication samples provided such as Alumni Reunion information and email to alumni are addressed to 'all graduates' and 'alumni'. Social media posts were also provided.

8.7   A virtual Orientation Day was held for the academic year 2020-21.

8.8   The following policies were not available on the website: Academic Advising Policy, the Student at Risk Policy, or the Students with Special Needs policy. The student handbook provides information and extracts from the Students with Special Needs Policy but does not include the actual policy.

8.9   The SED states that there is a process for reviewing and approving publicity materials and publicly available information. Although meetings with staff mentioned this, the team has not been able to verify this with a policy or procedure; the SED mentions that all 'publication materials' require official approval from HEC.

8.10   The website contains information about ASU which is of interest to a range of internal and external stakeholders. Information about ASU, its accreditations, partnerships, academic calendar, history and ranking is provided. Information for email, phone, or in-person enquiries is also available.

8.11   The ASU Strategy 2020-2025 is available in pdf format on the website. There is no further information under the strategy subpage. An organisational chart and ASU annual reports, President's New Digest, and University Prospectus are also available. The latest publication of ASU Annual report was 2018-19.

8.12   In addition to a brief statement about governance at ASU, information is provided on the Governance section. There is a Board of Trustees (BOT) subsection which has profiles for BOT members and a brief statement of roles and responsibilities.

8.13   The Governance section also provides information about the University Management Committee, which includes profiles on senior members of staff and a brief description of the role and responsibility of the committee.

8.14   The Affiliations and Partnerships section lists brief information on these areas against each partnership and affiliation. Information is provided in the Cardiff Metropolitan University partnership, which covers two degree programmes, but this is not included in the international section. Other partnerships include London South Bank University (LSBU), ACCA, and the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

8.15   There is a Student Affairs section on the ASU website which groups together the following sections of information staff profiles.

8.16   The Student Services office section provides brief information on student orientation, financial aid, student clubs, sports and recreation. Although the pages contain information on various areas relevant to students, signposting to contacts, support and further information is not consistently included. For example, the financial aid page refers to a form but does not provide a link or signpost to where the form may be located. Likewise, the orientation page does not link to the Orientation section which contains an Orientation Package. The section does not include links to relevant student regulations. Links are provided for student complaints and suggestions, and registration for sports teams.

8.17   There is a section which provides information about the Student Council, its objectives, and terms of nomination.

8.18   The Section for Student Counselling Office provides information on its objectives and the range of support available, but there is no further contact information or signposting to further information and assistance. The subsection on Special Needs Support refers to ASU policies regarding students with special needs, but does not link to policies, documents, and forms that may be useful.

8.19   The Student Help Desk page signposts to the reception desk with no specific location and that campus tour enquiries can contact the 'Deanship of the Student Affairs office'. There is no further contact information embedded.

8.20   The Student Resources section does not include information on the resources available to students at ASU, or links to further information. Information on General Services refer to lockers, printing and lost property.

8.21   The Admissions and Registration section provides information on the Directorate's role and responsibilities, and has specific subsections for prospective students, transfer students, current students, staff profiles, and an FAQ. The 'Apply Now' feature works to redirect the user toward information for prospective students.

8.22   The Prospective Students section includes information on admissions requirements, tuition fees, and academic programmes. The Student Application Guide and ASU student handbook are recently updated and available in pdf format, as well as online ASU and LSBU application forms.

8.23   The Transfer Student section lists the required documents and the credit transfer procedure for students transferring from another HEC-accredited provider in Bahrain.

8.24   The Current Student section has a subpage, Directorate Forms, which provides links to various forms, some of which are mentioned in other student-facing sections of the website. Subpages such as Academic Programmes, Academic Calendar, and Collection, Fees, and Refund Policy are linked to online documents found on other sections of the website.

8.25   The Collection, Fees, and Refund Policy is clear, up to date and publicly available.

8.26   Two Health and Safety videos are hosted under the student-focused section of the website.

8.27   The Community Engagement section states ASU's commitment to community engagement, has profiles of committee members, and links to community booklets. The last community booklet was published in 2018-19 and provides a collation of activities completed by ASU. There are links to various ASU social media accounts.

8.28   The International Office subpage does not provide linked contact information for partnership enquiries.

8.29   The International section of the website goes directly to a subpage about LSBU, with additional subpages 'Why LSBU' and linking to the College of Engineering with which it is partnered. A subpage for Entry requirements and application form specific to programmes are available via links. The FAQs for the international section only includes information on the LSBU partnership and programmes.

8.30   Two programmes are awarded by Cardiff Metropolitan University (CMU) and recognised by the Higher Education Council in the Kingdom of Bahrain. These programmes with the departments in the College of Administrative Sciences are:

- BA (Hons) Management and Business Studies
- BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance.

8.31   Study plans and course descriptions, including entry requirements, are available for both programmes but these are dated 2017.

8.32   Both department pages link to a booklet describing the partnership with CMU. The booklet states programme information from the academic year 2016-17. No further information is found about CMU, the partnership, or programmes.

8.33   A subpage (under International) provides information on the Academic Excellence Award Scheme. It is not clear if this information is specific to the LSBU programme, international students, or all applying students. It makes reference to the scheme being in place for validated programmes, but it is not clear if this includes validated programmes of LSBU and CMU.

8.34   The Colleges have dedicated pages on the ASU website which provide college handbooks, module and programme information, and faculty and staff information. The programme handbooks contain information on entry requirements. The handbooks are not consistent in the information provided.

8.35   The programme handbook for the College of Creative Arts and Sciences for 2019-21 contains information on programme description, admission criteria, progression pathways, graduation requirements, learning outcomes, programme structure, study plan, course tree, and course description for each degree programme offered. This handbook does not contain assessment modes.

8.36   The programme handbook for the College of Administrative Sciences is marked '2020-2021'. It contains information such as programme description, programme details, programme aims, programme structure, study plan, course tree, learning outcomes, and course description for each degree programme with graduation requirements for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes specific to the college.

8.37   The Programme Handbook for the College of Law is marked '2020-2021' and contains information such as programme details, programme leader, programme aims, programme structure, study plan, learning outcomes, learning, teaching, and assessment methods, curriculum mapping of courses, and course description for each degree programme. Bylaws for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are also provided.

8.38   The Programme Handbook for the College of Engineering is marked '2020-2021' and contains information such as field trips and site visits, modes of study, programme management, academic advisers, module leaders, timetable and module information, regulations including assessment, deadlines, and resources, facilities, procedures for enrolment, withdrawal, and interruption. There is also a list of programmes, study plans, programme outcomes, course mapping against programme learning outcomes, and module descriptions for each degree programme.

8.39   The ASU student handbook provides detailed information on the admissions policy for undergraduate, postgraduate, and transferring students. Additionally, it has information on fees, financial support, required documents for admission, procedures for admission, appeals, registration, and withdrawals, as well as ASU Regulations (Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policies, Student Disciplinary and Appeal Procedure), and COVID-19 Protection Procedures.

8.40   The research section of the website provides a range of information on the research aspirations and activities of ASU, seminar series, publications, relevant policies and ethics, theses, and handbooks for graduate students and research, as well as Master Thesis Guidelines. Both the Research Ethics Policy and the ASU Research Policy are available via links.

8.41   The Graduate Studies Handbook is available on the ASU website but not submitted as evidence for the review. The handbook includes information on the responsibilities of ASU and students in relation to research and postgraduate studies, programme information, bylaws and procedures, research and thesis requirements and guidelines.

8.42   The Research Handbook is available on the website and is not the same as the version submitted as evidence for the review, and neither are dated. The version submitted includes more content, while the version on the website includes information for the 2016-17 academic year.

8.43   The Career Development and Alumni Affairs section provides brief information on the objectives and services delivered, with some links to further information and contact information for alumni. A subsection is dedicated to the Alumni Club. An event schedule lists events held over a five-year period.

8.44   The Career and Alumni Services Policy lists the key objectives and responsibilities for the Career Development and Alumni Affairs office.

8.45   Stated objectives include employment skills and establishing an annual employment and training exhibition. Although there is no data or information on graduate employment or rates on the website, the Alumni Survey Statistic (by year) provides an overview of employment rates. There are also four testimonials from former students now working at ASU.

8.46   ASU is required to obtain approval of its public information from the Higher Education Council in the Kingdom of Bahrain. ASU provides a wide range of information on its website relating to programmes and activities. It is not always clear if the information is up-to-date. Linking and signposting to relevant website pages, documents, and forms would improve accessibility to public information. A search function would also allow users to navigate the website more easily. Information on degree programmes offered in partnership with LSBU and CMU varied and the currency of the information provided across webpages and handbooks was unclear. Although an internal process was described by staff for ensuring public information being accurate and up-to-date, the review team **recommends** that ASU formalises its internal procedures for maintaining and approving public information to ensure it is accurate and up-to-date.

8.47   ASU provides information about its activities, programmes, and overall direction to both prospective students and the public. The majority of information was clear and readily accessible. Notwithstanding the recommendation under this Standard around formalising its internal procedures currently in place to ensure that published information is accurate and up-to-date, the team concluded that, overall, Standard 1.8: Public information is **met**.

Standard 1.9   Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes

Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result should be communicated to all those concerned.

Findings

9.1   ASU maintains a regularly updated portfolio for each of the courses it delivers. Each portfolio contains documents, materials and data, combined with a reflective commentary on them, that together describe the process of planning, delivery, and outcomes of a single course. They include a sample of student work, as a minimum, that provided for the internal and external moderation processes.

9.2   There must always be a 'live' course portfolio relating to the current delivery of the course. It is the responsibility of the course instructor or course coordinator to maintain this portfolio. Following completion of delivery of a course, its portfolio will be retained by the QAAC for a minimum of three semesters of course delivery, and for an additional year, if the course is no longer being offered.

9.3   Colleges are responsible for ensuring that course portfolios are properly maintained.

9.4   An audit of course portfolios takes place three times a year by the College Course Portfolio Audit Committees. Additional audits are carried out on random samples by the College QAA Units and the QAAC.

9.5   The course portfolios, together with the student satisfaction survey results and the Course Evaluation Reports, which summarise the performance and achievement of students that took each course, contribute to the Annual Programme Review Report.

9.6   The Annual Programme Review Report is described in the Quality Assurance Manual and in the Monitoring and Review Policy. It is designed to gather and reflect upon feedback from students, staff, the external examiner, and other stakeholders, together with appropriate quantitative data, in order to assure the quality and academic standards of a programme, and to remedy any weaknesses.

9.7   Workshops for all programme leaders include guidance on how to use and interpret student performance and survey data for the APRR.

9.8   The APRR is a critical reflection on a programme. It includes consideration of several sources of information including the course evaluation reports, student evaluation questionnaires, student performance data, advisory board minutes, external moderator feedback and external examiner reports. It reviews student satisfaction, achievement levels, completion rates and progression rates to further study or employment, and concludes with an action plan for the following academic year which forms the first section of the next year's report, together with a commentary on how actions have been progressed in order to close the quality loop.

9.9   APRRs are forwarded to the relevant College Curriculum Committee and Department, and also to the QAAC.

9.10   The Quality Assurance Manual briefly describes the process for periodic review of academic programmes. The information is explained in detail in the Monitoring and Review Policy.

9.11   Periodic review takes place normally every five years. The process starts with a Programme Reflective Analysis Report prepared by the programme leader. The report includes consideration of external benchmarking, external examiner reports, APRRs and student data, which result in a Programme Reflective Analysis report.

9.12   A Periodic Review Panel is then constituted, comprising a convener appointed by the University Curriculum Committee, an external academic with relevant subject expertise, and two members of staff from QAAC. Minutes of University Council record approval of a Periodic Review Panel. In what is typically a two-day event, the panel meets with the College Dean, academic staff teaching on the programme and support staff.

9.13   The process results in a Periodic Programme Review Report, which includes recommendations and commendations. The resulting action plan includes any implications for the KPIs, a timeline for the response, any additional budgetary requirements, and who is responsible for addressing each action point.

9.14   Periodic Programme Review Reports are considered by QAA Council.

9.15   The programme leader is required to respond formally to the report detailing actions to be taken to address the recommendations. The response will be signed off by the Dean and forwarded for approval by the University Curriculum Committee and then to University Council and Board of Trustees. The QAAC plays a key role in ensuring that the action points are addressed and the quality loop is closed.

9.16   The Monitoring and Review Policy contains detailed information about what is required if the periodic review process identifies major changes to the programme. The Panel may request that the programme be submitted for revalidation. If the programme aims and learning outcomes have changed by more than 50%, the QAAC will advise what, if any, approval is required to comply with the National Qualifications Framework.

9.17   ASU currently offers four programmes that are validated externally. These are the BA (Hons) Management and Business Studies and the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance, both validated by Cardiff Metropolitan University, and the BEng (Hons) Architectural Engineering and the BEng (Hons) Civil Engineering, both validated by London South Bank University. The arrangement for annual monitoring and periodic review of these validated programmes is the same as for ASU's own awards.

9.18   The Programme External Examiner Report provides an external evaluation on the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date.

9.19   The Quality Manual includes a Benchmarking Process. It is described in detail in the Benchmarking Policy. The process includes comparing the programme against competitor programmes offered by other universities, other programmes at the ASU, and longitudinally against past performance. The benchmarking exercise is carried out on a five-year cycle, as part of the Periodic Programme Review Report, and more frequently if required for specific aspects of a programme.

9.20   Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes include the evaluation of the changing needs of society. One of the key responsibilities of the Programme Advisory Boards is to advise on the development of academic programmes to ensure their continued alignment with the requirements of the industry.

9.21　　The Programme External Examiner Report specifically asks whether there is evidence of scoping of the labour market in the programme design and content, and whether the content is current and in line with other similar programmes offered by other institutions.

9.22　　In the Annual Programme Review Reports, the programme leader is required to reflect upon feedback from employers and any changes in the labour market.

9.23　　Example Annual Programme Review Reports show that the process includes consideration of students' evaluations of the teaching, student performance data, and any issues raised in staff-student-alumni liaison meetings. The report asks specifically for comment on the progression and completion rates.

9.24　　In the Programme External Examiner Report external examiners are asked to comment on the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the assessment methods used in the programme. These reports are considered in the Annual Programme Review Report and the Periodic Programme Review processes.

9.25　　Both the Annual Programme Review Report and the Periodic Programme Review processes include the consideration of a wide range of survey data, including data from course evaluation surveys and student satisfaction surveys that cover student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to their programmes.

9.26　　Students have many opportunities to provide feedback on all aspects of their programmes, through surveys, the student helpline, social media, direct feedback to teachers, and others. All this information is collected and contributes to the Annual Programme Review process and the Periodic Programme Review process. Further information for both review processes comes from the Programme Advisory Boards, the External Examiner Reports, and the Alumni Satisfaction Survey and Employers' Evaluation of ASU Graduates.

9.27　　The panel includes an external member who is an academic with relevant subject expertise. The periodic review event includes meetings with teaching and support staff, but not students or externals.

9.28　　However, meetings with students, alumni or external stakeholders are not explicitly required by the Periodic Programme Review process, though the panel may meet with students, alumni, or external stakeholders, if desired.

9.29　　In keeping with the stated intention to enhance student involvement in decision-making processes, the review team **recommends** that the student voice is collected in a more structured manner, such as explicit involvement of students in the deliberative process, or consultation with representative students as part of the periodic review and programme approval processes.

9.30　　The professional support services at ASU work closely with programme review teams and are themselves audited on a regular basis.

9.31　　Panels meet with support staff during the Periodic Programme Review event. Support staff also contribute to the monitoring and review of programmes through membership of the Student Affairs Committee, whose remit includes programme review including the provision of facilities and support to students. Information about the effectiveness of the professional support services is also available in the surveys completed by students.

9.32　　Further information about the effectiveness of the support services is available to Periodic Programme Review panels from the automatic collection of usage data for

electronic resources, and the number of appointments with individual services. The data is considered in the Annual Programme Review Report, which includes consideration of the quality and adequacy of the teaching accommodation, equipment and learning resources.

9.33 Professional support service units are reviewed periodically by audit. The process is described in the Quality Manual. QAAC receives and considers audit reports, together with the associated action plan, which must be developed within one month of the completion of the audit. An example audit report, action plan, and follow-up were provided to the team.

9.34 ASU operates comprehensive and interconnected annual monitoring and periodic review processes. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.9: Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes is **met**.

Standard 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.

Findings

10.1   According to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, external quality reviews and national and international accreditations are key success factors in assuring the quality of the curricula, and that assessments are clear, transparent, and appropriate.

10.2   As described in the QA Manual, ASU is subject to a number of the external quality assurance requirements provided by the BQA and the Higher Education Council, including:

- Directorate of Higher Education Reviews (DHR) Institutional Review by BQA which focuses on the quality assurance arrangements of the institution as a whole.
- DHR Programme Review by BQA, which examines individual programmes of study and the quality assurance arrangements controlling them.
- General Directorate of National Qualifications Framework (GDQ) - National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Institutional Listing by BQA, which certifies an institution and includes an evaluation of the institution's formal arrangements for maintaining the academic standards of their qualifications placed on NQF.
- GDQ - NQF Qualification Placement by BQA, which is the process of assessing whether a programme can be placed on the National Qualifications Framework.
- Institutional Accreditation by the Higher Education Council, which is a rigorous inspection process underpinned by internationally recognised standards that supports the licensing process.

10.3   The QAAC plays a central role in managing the University's preparation and engagement with each of these review processes, including both institutional and academic programme reviews. It assists academic units with external review processes, including the provision of training and support with preparing the self-evaluation review.

10.4   Gaining international professional accreditation for appropriate programmes is one of the institution's strategic aims; the number of internationally accredited programmes forms one of the strategic KPIs. ASU has linked with international professional bodies for some programmes, including: International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) for the Bachelor's in Interior Design; AACSB for the College of Administrative Sciences; Association for Information Systems (AIS) Community for the Bachelor's in Management Information Systems; and BCS - The Chartered Institute for IT for the Bachelor's in Computer Science. Currently, the Bachelor's in Accounting and Finance is accredited by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). In addition to providing an independent external recognition of the programmes, association with the professional bodies provides useful benchmarking information.

10.5   External quality assurance processes result in action plans that are monitored by the QAAC.

10.6   ASU ensures that its qualifications are subject to annual evaluation and periodic review to ensure they remain aligned with the NQF. When a major revision to a programme is required that could affect the NQF level or credit value of the qualification, the University consults directly with the BQA through the General Directorate of Qualifications for appropriate action.

10.7   Between external accreditation events, the Measurement and Evaluation Unit of the QAAC regularly conducts cohort analyses and surveys as described in the Quality Assurance Manual.

10.8   Through the regulation of BQA, NQF, and HEC, its association with international professional bodies and now engagement with the UK Quality Assurance Agency, ASU satisfies the requirements of this Standard. Between external quality assessments, it engages in a process of continual enhancement of its provision. The review team therefore concludes that Standard 1.10: Cyclical external quality assurance is **met**.

Glossary

Action plan
A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published, which is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring
Checking a process or activity every year to see whether it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement
A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider. These may be degree-awarding bodies with which the institution collaborates to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, they may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of the institution's higher education programmes.

Degree-awarding body
Institutions that have authority, for example from a national agency, to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IQR may be degree-awarding bodies themselves, or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis
An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement
See **quality enhancement**.

European Standards and Guidelines
For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg.

Examples of practice
A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgment that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Externality
The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

Facilitator
The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA officer and who will be available during the review visit to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

Good practice
A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

Lead student representative
An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IQR to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

Oversight
Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

Peer reviewers
Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

Periodic review
An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

Programme of study
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Quality enhancement
The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

QAA officer
The person appointed by QAA to manage the review programme and to act as the liaison between the review team and the institution.

Quality assurance
The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

Recognition of prior learning
Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

Recommendation
Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

Reference points
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

Student submission

A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

Validation

The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.