



This review method  
is ESG-compliant

# International Programme Accreditation

**University College of Bahrain**

Master's in Business Administration (MBA)

External Quality Assurance Agency  
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education UK  
Date of Accreditation Visit: June 2025

**Review Report**

June 2025

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## About this review

This is a report of an International Programme Accreditation conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at University College of Bahrain (UCB) for its Master's in Business Administration (MBA) programme. The review took place on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and was conducted by a team of 3 reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Youhansen Eid
- Dr John Byrom
- Ms Chrystalle Margallo (student reviewer)

The QAA Officer for this review was Dr Andrew Thomas.

The International Programme Accreditation (IPA) review directly followed on from a three-day QAA International Quality Review of University College of Bahrain. The IPA review was allocated one day. UCB chose to submit one Self-Evaluation Document (SED) to cover both IQR and IPA parts, and evidence submitted to support the self-evaluation was a mix of both institutional and programme review aspects. Additional evidence relevant to the MBA requested by the team on the day of the review has been added to the Evidence list at the end of this report, in addition to additional evidence requested during the IQR phase.

International Programme Accreditation (IPA) 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 institutions' 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 \(ESG\)](#).

In International Programme Accreditation, the QAA review team:

- makes conclusion against each of the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG
- makes conditions (if relevant)
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- comes to an overall conclusion as to whether the institution meets the standards for International Programme Accreditation

A summary of the findings can be found in the section: [Key findings](#). The section [Explanations of the findings](#) provides the detailed commentary.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission. A dedicated section explains the method for [International Programme Accreditation](#) and has links to other informative documents. For an explanation of terms see the [Glossary](#) at the end of this report.

# Key findings

## Executive summary

University College of Bahrain (UCB) was founded in 2002. The University is a non-profit private higher education institution licensed by the Kingdom of Bahrain's Ministry of Education. Its campus is located in Saar, Bahrain. The undergraduate degree programmes of UCB were originally developed around a Canadian model through a formal relationship with McMaster University. However, UCB now has its own degree awarding powers. The MBA programme has been delivered since 2005.

UCB's mission is to 'provide academic programmes of high quality, delivered through excellent teaching, informed by research and scholarship, that transform lives, and equip graduates with the skills, knowledge, and competencies, to enable them to have fulfilling careers and meet the needs of society, government, business, and the economy.' Its vision is to be 'the leading private University of choice in the Kingdom of Bahrain for students, and other stakeholders, providing a quality assurance driven, and market-focused, education in the fields of the liberal arts and sciences.'

UCB is currently licensed to award degrees in the following four programmes:

1. Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (NQF Level 8) – Delivered since 2002
2. Bachelor of Science in Information Technology (NQF Level 8) – Delivered since 2002
3. Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Multimedia (NQF Level 8) – Delivered since 2004
4. Master of Business Administration (NQF Level 9) – Delivered since 2005

The MBA underwent QAA IQR at the same time as the IQR. UCB's strategic planning aligns with Bahrain's Higher Education Council's Higher Education, and Research Strategies which reflect government themes of (a) entrepreneurship and innovation and (b) community engagement and graduate skills.

UCB is a small university with 163 undergraduate students supported by 13 full-time and 6 part-time staff across undergraduate and MBA programmes. For undergraduate programmes, AY 2023/4 student numbers are BSc in Business Administration (46), BA in Communication and Multimedia (80), and BSc in Information Technology (37). For AY 2023/24, 285 full-time students are enrolled in the MBA. There are no part-time MBA students.

Challenges identified by the college include raising student enrolments and moving away from dependence on Ministry of Higher Education for streaming students into the programmes. This has been mitigated by a recent major change following the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's recognition of institutions in Bahrain for enrolment purposes and consequent rapid increase in student numbers, especially into the MBA.

In reaching conclusions about the extent to which University College of Bahrain meets the 10 ESG Standards, the QAA review team followed the evidence-based review procedure as outlined in the handbook for International Programme Accreditation (November 2023). The University provided the review team with a self-evaluation and supporting evidence. During the review visit, which took place on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 the review team held a total of 4 meetings with: Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs and Quality, Head of Business Administration Department, and MBA Program Director; academic staff responsible for delivering the teaching of the MBA; current MBA students; and employers and members of Industry Advisory Boards. As the IQR was carried out in the period 15<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> April, the review team was also able to interview a wider range of institutional stakeholders. The review team also had the opportunity to observe the University's facilities and learning resources at UCB's Saar campus.

In summary, the team was able to make 5 recommendations for improvement/enhancement. The recommendations are of a desirable rather than essential nature and are proposed to enable the University to build on existing practice which is operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced. The team identified 1 condition that the University must satisfy to achieve QAA accreditation.

Overall, the team concluded that University College of Bahrain **meets** all the standards for International Programme Accreditation **subject to meeting a specific condition**.

In May 2025, University College of Bahrain submitted additional evidence with reference to actions to address the Condition. After considering the additional evidence, the review team concludes that University College of Bahrain has addressed the Condition and therefore it **meets** all 10 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

## QAA's conclusions about University College of Bahrain MBA programme

The QAA review team reached the following conclusions about the higher education provision at University College of Bahrain for its MBA.

### European Standards and Guidelines

University College of Bahrain's Master's in Business Administration programme meets 9 of the 10 ESG Standards and Guidelines. The standard not met by University College of Bahrain is:

- Standard 1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance

### Conditions

The QAA review team identified the following **condition** that must be fulfilled before all of the European Standards and Guidelines can be deemed met at University College of Bahrain. The condition must be addressed within 12 months:

- UCB review the newly developed Quality Assurance Policy to ensure its fitness for purpose in guiding the MBA programme forward and that the policy be clearly integrated into strategic and operational planning and functions to further a systemic approach to quality assurance and enhancement and foster a culture of quality and ensure that this culture is reflected in all the activities of the MBA programme. (Standard 1.1).

Following the submission of additional evidence by University College of Bahrain in May 2025, the review team concludes that the Condition above has been fulfilled in so far as the Quality Assurance Policy has been enhanced, and evidence has been provided as to how the Quality Assurance Policy is linked to Strategic and Operational Planning and anchors a more systemic approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

The review team was pleased to note that UCB had also begun the process of addressing the review team's Recommendations as set out below, but feels that comment on the progress on these is best addressed at the mid-cycle review when appropriate embedding, data analysis and improvement activity has taken place.

In summary, the review team concludes the Condition placed on UCB above relevant to ESG Standard 1.1 Policy for Quality Assurance has been fulfilled and consequently all ESG Standards are **met** for the IPA.

## Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following 5 **recommendations** to University College of Bahrain.

- Further leverage the Industry Advisory Board to consider how a co-curricular MBA programme focused on soft skills development for career advancement might be devised. (ESG Standard 1.2, para 2.8)
- UCB develops a policy and process for Mitigating Circumstances that covers all instances where MBA students' completion of assessment may be impacted (ESG Standard 1.3, para 3.14)
- Consider opportunities for continuous professional development for those teaching on the MBA which encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies in teaching and assessment (ESG Standard 1.5, para 5.9)
- The MBA programme develops enhanced analysis tools and use these to develop thematic reports that inform the decision-making process. (ESG Standard 1.7, para 7.5)
- Establish a website management policy to support the maintenance of the website (Standard 1.8, para 8.5)

## Explanation of the findings about University College of Bahrain

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 The commitment of University College of Bahrain (UCB) to quality assurance of all its programmes - including the MBA - is strongly evident in its strategic plan. UCB developed a strategic plan for 2018-2024 setting its first strategic goal as: 'Quality assurance, accreditation, and review'. To achieve this goal, the University ensures that all its programmes are aligned with Bahrain's Higher Education Council (HEC), and the Education and Training Quality Authority's (BQA) accreditation standards and seeks recognition and accreditation by local and international statutory bodies.

1.2 The team found this commitment evident in the academic framework and is emphasized through all the activities of the University, including its student-centred approach and faculty training. The success of UCB's objectives can be seen in the achievement of KPIs i.e. the recent accreditation by Bahrain's Higher Education Council (HEC) and the Council of the Accreditation and Quality Commission for Higher Education in Jordan (AQACHEI), and inclusion by Saudi authorities for students to study at UCB.

1.3 The team also learned that the MBA programme has been the destination for many of the Saudi students over the last Academic Year (2023/24). In addition, the team was informed that the MBA programme was submitted for accreditation by AQACHEI (Jordan) and was granted Jordan QA certification in April 2024, for a period of two years. In addition, the Programme is preparing its improvement plan to address the BQA requirements and prepare for the next submission reviewed by Council of the Accreditation and Quality Commission for Higher Education in Jordan (AQACHEI) and the programme was waiting for the final findings and report.

1.4 To guarantee effective delivery and quality of its programs, UCB developed a quality management system (QMS). This system is administered by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) that is responsible for the overall management and oversight of the quality system at UCB. It is headed by the Director of the Quality Assurance and Accreditation and is supported by the quality assurance and accreditation manager.

1.5 The team noted with some concern that a Quality Policy had only been approved on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and implemented thereafter. However, UCB has had a Quality Manual since 2019 (updated 2023) to express its comprehensive approach to quality as part of its academic ethos of excellence. This manual serves to ensure a shared comprehension of quality standards and outlines the approach to Quality Management System (QMS).

1.6 The Quality Policy defines the quality assurance approach based on the following five principles: continuous improvement; stakeholder involvement; compliance; academic integrity; and protection against intolerance and discrimination. The policy references the quality assurance model - Plan, Do, Check, Act - and identifies both external and internal quality assurance as the main pillars of quality assurance in the institution. External quality assurance is identified within the activities of external review and benchmarking. However, the team concluded that the newly approved Quality Assurance Policy was not sufficiently detailed to guide the University in developing consistent decision-making processes and improvement steps that would build towards a culture of quality over one of compliance.

1.7 For the comprehensive implementation and management of quality, UCB developed a mechanism that involves all faculty members. In principle, quality assurance (QA) is the



responsibility of the QAAO that is supported by the QAA Committee. Oversight of implementing and maintaining QA is the responsibility of the President and the Vice President for academic affairs and quality (VPAA). While at the MBA programme level, QA is the responsibility of the Business Administration (BA) department council and the Head of Department (HOD) is the liaison between the programme and the QAAO and reports directly to the VPAA.

1.8 In addition, UCB systematically administers and deploys several surveys to guarantee the involvement of faculty members, students and external stakeholders, employers, alumni and exit surveys. The results of the surveys and the audits are analysed by the QAAO and are communicated to the BA department in the form of recommendations and improvement suggestions.

1.9 The QAAO administers the course specification, course report and course file audit review. The team also noted that the role of the BA department, in Quality Assurance of the MBA programme, is crucial as it is responsible for identifying the internal and external requirements for better programme delivery and monitors the whole cycle of internal audit. The team reviewed the files that were submitted as evidence for the MBA programme and concluded that the submitted files fulfilled the standards set by the QAAO.

1.10 Several internal audits have been carried out for the MBA programme, and the improvements documented in the Annual Program Monitoring Report. External audits and reviews have also been carried out by HEC/ BQA bodies and UCB consider these as critical to establishing and maintaining the quality assurance of the programme.

1.11 Student engagement in quality assurance processes occurs through various channels. Apart from questionnaires and surveys, soliciting feedback on teaching staff, facilities, support services, and overall experiences, students can voice their opinions and raise concerns during the committees they are represented in and by discussing with faculty and tutors. Faculty members assured the team that the voice of the students is heard through the annual monitoring reports and that UCB responds to their needs. For example, UCB has opened the library on Saturday to accommodate MBA students and in addition it provides access to the library databases, such as Jstor, ProQuest One Business and ProQuest E-Book Central.

1.12 The team found that although there seems to be evidence of documents in place to allow the standard to be met in principle, it wanted to test the effectiveness of the policies and procedures and the efficacy of the quality assurance cycle that UCB claims to deploy.

1.13 In testing the operational effectiveness of the policy for quality assurance, the team held extensive discussions with staff and students. These meetings were focused on the application of the quality assurance procedures, how well they were understood and whether there was a robust quality assurance system and a culture of quality that guaranteed continuous improvement. It also scrutinized the documents and the evidence supplied by the University.

1.14 It was noted that course reports were not reflective and simply document maintenance of the status quo via mostly checklists. There were no clear explanations for the examination results in some of the courses that were uploaded as evidence (for example in one course, the results were reported to be normal distribution where clearly it was skewed 73.4% A, A-) This is also apparent in the internship and moderation reports provided, where the nature of the query is simply to verify that the papers and the procedures are in order rather than a true reflection of the essence of the audit itself. The Library Gap Analysis is simply a check list of the available books for the courses for the BA department.

1.15 UCB administers stakeholder surveys, yet there is insufficient external stakeholder involvement (some surveys did not meet the participation ratio targeted). The provided

evidence was of the results and final analyses and reflected a high degree of satisfaction with low marginal differences. Furthermore, some of the submitted evidence included statements from student surveys in employers survey; thus, questioning the integrity, validity, and reliability of these reports.

1.16 The team found no evidence that the results and recommendations of the surveys are incorporated into the enhancement plans or have an impact on enhancing the educational experience of the students. For example, although the QAA Office disseminates the results to all departments, urging them to integrate essential skills and employer's recommendation into the curriculum, the team found no tangible evidence that this advice was incorporated in the plans. Faculty members were aware of students' surveys and feedback but did not acknowledge nor mention any of the stakeholders' feedback.

1.17 The QAAO conducted several training and information sessions and workshops to prepare faculty and staff for the accreditation visits that the institution underwent. There were mock interviews and workshops for each of the visits. The team did not find that the newly approved Quality Policy guided the university in developing and consistent decision-making processes and improvement steps that would build towards a culture of quality over one of compliance.

1.18 The team was also of the opinion that there was a lack of clear strategic objectives regarding the strategic direction of future accreditation procedures for the MBA. This can be explained by the lack of university-wide operational plans and the absence of an institution-wide quality culture, and practices guided by a comprehensive Quality Assurance Policy and linked to strategic planning.

1.19 The team found that the practice of internal quality assurance within the University is focused on the academic programmes with little evidence submitted to prove the continuous review of the administrative processes, nor the overall administration of any other process within UCB. In meetings with administrative staff, no evidence was provided to reach a different conclusion; only a few attendees indicated that they conduct surveys at the end of some events, and but no real systematic internal review took place. This was attributed to the fact that the new Quality Assurance Policy has only been in effect since January 2024 though it is acknowledged that a Quality Manual has been in place since 2019 (updated in 2023).

1.20 In summary, UCB had created policies and procedures around quality assurance but there was significant weakness in demonstrating that these policies and QA measures have a real impact on the enhancement of the educational programmes in relation to the MBA. The team concluded that the lack of an adequate Quality Assurance Policy had impacted UCB's ability to formulate and operate a cohesive and coherent quality assurance system. As a result, the quality culture of UCB remained one of compliance rather than evaluation and continuous improvement. Though the team acknowledged the approval of a Quality Assurance Policy in January 2024, it had not seen evidence of how such a policy informed Strategic Planning. Though it was further acknowledged that a new Strategic plan was then under development, it was concluded that UCB being able to evidence the link between policy and planning would give confidence that a systemic approach to QA was being implemented.

1.21 The team set the following **condition to meet Standard 1.1**; that UCB review the newly developed Quality Assurance Policy to ensure its fitness for purpose in guiding the MBA programme forward and that the policy be clearly integrated into strategic and operational planning and functions to further a systemic approach to quality assurance and enhancement and foster a culture of quality and ensure that this culture is reflected in all the activities of the MBA programme.

1.22 The team concluded at the time that Standard 1.1 Policy for Quality assurance was **not met**.

1.23 In May 2025, UCB submitted further evidence which was scrutinised by a review team to determine whether the Condition set had been met. The team's findings follow:

1.24 UCB have created a new Quality Assurance Policy which highlights five key principles, namely Continuous Improvement, Stakeholder Involvement, Compliance, Academic Integrity and [anti-] Intolerance and Discrimination. At the programme level (and therefore directly relevant to the MBA programme under consideration here), the importance of regular evaluation of curricula, teaching and learning, assessment and evaluation, and student support services are emphasised. Changes to strategic decision-making, including associated committee structures, have also been effected. An *ad hoc* Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) for instance, which includes senior managers of the institution and representatives from the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Department (QAAD), was tasked with devising strategy for the next five-year period; with Quality Enhancement forming the first strategic goal of the new Strategic Plan approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2025. Operational plans for administrative and academic units (the latter including academic departments, within which programmes such as the MBA are 'housed') have also been developed further: scrutiny of a sample of these reveals closer alignment between actions and overarching institutional strategy.

1.25 The review team understands that University College of Bahrain has a commitment to quality improvement in respect of its programmes, but the processes supporting this were not always apparent, particularly in respect of translating quality systems into practice in a coherent way that sustainably tied together key elements such as strategic and operational planning, goals, and improvement. The further submission in May 2025 demonstrates that these deficiencies have been rectified and, if put into practice effectively should result in demonstrable improvements to the institution's quality assurance systems going forward.

1.26 The review team therefore concludes that the condition has been addressed and Standard 1.1: Policy for quality assurance is now **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 UCB's Strategic Plan articulates a wish to strengthen the programmes it offers, in line with Bahrain's national higher education strategy. As an institution within the Bahraini national system, UCB possesses a licence to offer the MBA degree at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 9, and has run the programme for almost 20 years. The team reviewed a range of evidence which explained how the University approaches the design and approval of new programmes. The Quality Manual articulates the hierarchical relationships between Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), University College Intended Learning Outcomes (UILOs), and Student General Attributes (GAs). Although it is a little difficult to navigate, the manual does affirm that the institution is cognisant of the inter-relationships between intended learning objectives at different levels, including how assessment features as part of an ongoing assessment cycle.

2.2 The Qualification Design Approval and Review Policy sets out the formal arrangements at UCB for the design of new programmes, including their position within the broader National Qualification Framework. The policy establishes the importance of need when designing a new programme and sets out how the Head of Department formulates a programme development team to progress a new offering. The policy affirms that new programmes need to be structured in such a way to ensure that academic progression takes place year-on-year through a series of courses. This provided evidence to the team that UCB is aware of the importance of designing new programmes that enable smooth student progression.

2.3 UCB's Self Evaluation Document (SED) acknowledges that workloads for students are set 'on a semester credit hour system in the USA/Canadian liberal arts tradition', reflecting UCB's origins which involved a close working relationship with McMaster University, Canada. The team therefore sought to understand the operation of this further via scrutiny of the MBA programme specification, which had been revised in November 2022. The MBA is offered in five 'concentrations' (i.e. specialisms): Management, Islamic Finance, Banking and Finance, Marketing and International Business, and Management Information Systems (MIS). The programme specification also establishes that 36 credit hours are required for the completion of the degree, with the study plan setting out the number of credits for each core or concentration course (3 credit hours), followed by the double-weighted thesis/business project (6 credit hours).

2.4 The MBA capstone project contains a viva component which the team felt was a positive attribute given the rise of generative artificial intelligence, and all proposed project titles must be approved by Bahrain's Higher Education Commission (HEC). The team also reviewed the presentation material delivered to students which outlines the nature of the project and found it to be detailed and relevant. The programme specification states clearly that the programme is offered at Level 9 of the NQF Credit framework. The team therefore concluded that the expected student workload had been appropriately defined, albeit against one that does not refer to the ECTS framework utilised in Europe.

2.5 The team reviewed the participation of students in the design and approval of new programmes. It was apparent from the Qualification Design Approval and Review Policy that the role of students as stakeholders is recognised as being important. This was evident in the description of the initial consultation process, which involves students and other stakeholders, and through the establishment of a programme development team when a new offering is being developed. During the visit, the team became aware of the University's plans to develop a specialist MBA in the field of Healthcare Management. As the plans were still nascent, the team were not able to explore fully the extent to which students and other stakeholders had been involved in the design of this new programme but noted that the initial proposal had been considered at the department's Industry Advisory Board (IAB).

2.6 The Qualification Design Approval and Review Policy also sets out the significant role of externality in new provision. This aspect is also dealt with in the External Reviewer's/Moderator's Policy, which outlines the points at which external moderation must be applied (further considered in Standard 1.3, below). The policy sets out how an external reviewer is appointed to scrutinise the proposed definitive documentation (i.e. programme and course specifications) and to review of a range of aspects including learning outcomes, teaching, assessment methods, and learning resources. The policy sets out the subsequent steps following external review, noting that the University College Council (UCC) is responsible for final approval internally, prior to the relevant documentation being submitted to the HEC. Initial approval by HEC will then lead to the new programme being implemented.

2.7 The department's Industry Advisory Board (IAB) includes a range of relevant employer representatives and, amongst other things, serves as a vehicle through which proposed new provision may be 'sense-checked,' via meetings with the programme development team. To establish the operations of the IAB, the team reviewed its terms of reference, expectations matrix, and induction document and formed the view that the University appropriately managed the on-boarding of new members. Review of other IAB documentation, including a sample of meeting minutes also demonstrated to the team that employers (as external stakeholders) are involved in the development of curricula and the team formed the view that the involvement of employers as key external stakeholders is managed effectively.

2.8 The team therefore formed the view that UCB demonstrably engaged employers via the operations of its IAB but **recommends** that it further leverages the IAB to consider how a co-curricular programme focused on soft skills development for career advancement might be devised.

2.9 The team also considered the operations of UCB's Community Engagement Unit, given that this enables UCB to facilitate further interactions with key external stakeholders. Evidence relating to the CEU's activities was considered by the team and which demonstrated a range of activity undertaken across the course of the year. The CEU looks to put on a range of relevant activities which benefit the community, and which involve student participation. Examples cited during the visit included student involvement in beach cleaning and tree-planting. The team were impressed with the range and scale of activity undertaken by this function of UCB, which also provided a mechanism through which some students were able to secure a work placement.

2.10 In summary, the team confirms that UCB has suitable processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The MBA programme is designed so that it meets the objectives set for it, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from the programme is clearly specified and communicated and refers to the correct level of the national qualifications framework. Therefore, 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 The team considered how UCB respects and attends to the diversity of MBA students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths. A review of the Learning, Teaching, and Enhancement (LTE) Policy revealed the University's aspirations in respect of recognising how high-quality teaching is to be enacted. It was further evident that a range of different teaching methods were offered at UCB on the MBA, including lectures, debates, field trips, and guest lectures. The team's tour of the campus demonstrated a range of suitable facilities to support the delivery of different teaching styles, including computer labs, which were suited to the provision of teaching and learning on the MBA. The team were also reassured that suitable systems were in place to enable students to take a break in study, as further evidenced by the MBA Programme Bylaws, which stipulate that students may take up to four years to complete the programme and refer to the arrangements for taking a suspension from studies.

3.2 The review visit also revealed further detail relating to the use of Microsoft Teams within the MBA programme at UCB. The University is actively planning to introduce Moodle in the coming months, but at present, Teams functions as the Learning Management System (LMS). The team received a demonstration of the platform which reassured them that its full functionality was drawn upon, for example how teaching materials were posted, how assessments were set, and feedback was returned, as well as how communication between teaching staff and students was facilitated. The meeting with students further reinforced the view that the platform was being utilised appropriately.

3.3 To establish whether the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods are regularly evaluated and adjusted, the team considered the process of annual review adopted at UCB. By scrutinising the MBA Annual Programme Monitoring Reports for 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, the team was able to understand the process utilised to make changes to the delivery of curricula. It was apparent how more online formative exercises had been introduced into the curriculum, with other improvements including the scheduling of guest lectures in three courses, as well as a field trip to the Bahrain Bourse.

3.4 The team also considered how input from the department's IAB had been captured at the programme level. Through review of the minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2022, the team noted that the Business Administration teaching team had sought feedback on aspects of the MBA curriculum from IAB members, including the intended learning outcomes and the programme structure. This had led to a range of suggested modifications to the programme, including more content on data visualisation and analysis, digitalisation, and fintech; as well as training on presentation and communication skills. This further demonstrated to the team that the processes of evaluation utilised by UCB enabled changes to potentially be made to curricula.

3.5 The team were keen to understand how UCB encourages the further development of MBA students, including how they actively support them in their learning. This was apparent through UCB's approach to academic advising. The University's Academic Advising and At-Risk Student Policy sets out the scope of academic advising, including in relation to course selection at the commencement of semesters, as well as pastoral considerations. All members of faculty act as academic advisors and during the visit, the team gained further insights into how the Student Information System (SIS) was utilised to support this activity. The team also noted that UCB teaching staff operate daily office hours for students, which

may take place in-person or online, acknowledging that the latter is likely to be of particular value to MBA students who are highly likely to be working full-time. The meeting with students further confirmed that they felt well-supported and that they are active participants in their learning, demonstrating to the team that there was mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship.

3.6 The team considered the University's policy and procedures in relation to complaints. The team reviewed the Student Grievance and Appeal Policy which deals with academic and non-academic complaints, as well as the associated Student Complaint Form. The process utilised by UCB is clear and easy-to-follow with a three-stage process leading potentially to consideration by the University Appeal Committee. The meeting with staff from academic support teams demonstrated to the team that there was awareness surrounding the process. However, evidence for the operation of the policy in practice was difficult to discern, due to few formal complaints being raised or logged. As UCB is a relatively small institution, in which students are more likely to feel able to readily bring to the surface any issues of concern with teaching staff or other relevant staff, this is not surprising.

3.7 Turning to assessment, the team reviewed UCB's Assessment and Moderation Policy, which provides an overview of how these activities are to be enacted within UCB. Key definitions are outlined, and the document is indicative of an approach which recognises the importance of how these two fundamental aspects of higher education are to be delivered. The policy establishes that a lecturer develops a course specification containing key information pertaining to the learning outcomes and assessment which is then subject to further review internally. The policy also mandates that a split in the assessment of 40% (coursework), 20% (mid-term exam) and 40% (final exam) should be put in place, as further evidenced in the MBA Programme Bylaws.

3.8 The Assessment and Moderation Policy establishes that a range of internal and external moderation activity takes place, both prior to assessments being issued to students, as well as once work has been assessed. The policy sets out how the moderation of all assessment items takes place, and the policy establishes that internal moderation takes place across all courses in each semester, meaning that more than one examiner is involved in the assessment of student work.

3.9 External moderation is also carried out on a quarter of all courses that are offered at UCB in each semester. Further details regarding the process are also evident in the External Reviewer's/ Moderator's Policy. This sets out expectations for external oversight, and since this applies to all programmes, as well as the occasions on which this takes place (new programme approval, periodic review, pre-moderation, post-moderation), the range of such activity is suitably comprehensive.

3.10 The team reviewed completed external moderation documentation relating to the MBA which evidences the processes through which external moderators are invited to comment on courses offered on the MBA. During the visit, teaching staff were able to clearly articulate how moderation processes were enacted at UCB. The team also scrutinised evidence of internal and external moderation of assessment prior to it being issued to students and formed the view that UCB's approach to moderation was robust.

3.11 The team also considered how University staff that teach on the MBA familiarise themselves with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field. During the visit, the team noted that when joining UCB, new appointees within the Business Administration department, who will typically teach on both the MBA and the undergraduate programme, are supported in terms of assessment and moderation as part of induction and that departmental meetings act as suitable fora for the discussion of approaches to assessment. As considered below in relation to Standard 1.5, suitable systems are in place in relation to professional development of staff, but there is

scope for UCB to further support the development of their staff in relation to the enhancement of pedagogy.

3.12 The team considered samples of MBA course specifications which provide detail on the key aspects of a specific module of study and demonstrate the type of assessment alongside the learning outcomes that are to be addressed. UCB utilises a range of assessment types, which included different question types on final and mid-term exams used on the MBA, as well as suitable assessments pertaining to 'real life' which formed part of the coursework assignments that students completed. A sample of specific assignment briefs was reviewed, which focused on topics such as organisational and group dynamics and workplace communication. A standard approach to these is apparent in the form of a coursework template which academic staff fill out with details of the task. The basis on which the individual task would be marked was also evident in the samples reviewed. This helped confirm to the team that students would be able to demonstrate how they met the intended learning outcomes.

3.13 Samples of feedback issued to students were considered by the team, including feedback on formative and summative coursework tasks carried out by MBA students. The work reviewed included assignments relating to investment management and research methods. The work included marginal comments detailing how work had been assessed, although evidence for feedforward was lacking on the samples reviewed. During the visit, the team were also apprised of how UCB's approach to feedback was enacted by those teaching on the MBA. Students affirmed that they were able to receive feedback through a range of channels, both formal and informal. Given the close relationships apparent between staff and students, the team were therefore reassured that communication regarding performance on assessments, including areas for improvement, was likely to take place on an ongoing basis.

3.14 The team explored how UCB approaches the management of mitigating circumstances that MBA students may have when undertaking assessment, as the Assessment and Moderation Policy does not cover this area. Although it was evident from oral testimony that individual students on the MBA had been appropriately supported, the team were unable to establish which documented policy and procedures were utilised when students felt unable to complete an assessment within the stated timeframes (notwithstanding the existence of a process for those that missed exams, as set out in the Procedures for Appeals for Missing Exams.) The team therefore **recommends** that UCB develop a policy and process for Mitigating Circumstances that covers all instances where students' completion of assessment may be impacted.

3.15 In summary, the team formed the view that UCB has implemented a student-centred approach to the implementation of learning and teaching on the MBA. UCB's approach to assessment is well-developed, with appropriate policies, procedures and systems in place which are consistent and fairly applied. A formal procedure for student appeals is in place. 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 Prospective MBA students gain access to admission information and course specification through open days and visits to the University. Students who cannot visit on site are redirected to the website. Students are provided with an Academic Catalogue which provides general Information about admission, registration, progression, and certification. More programme-specific reference is made in the student handbooks for undergraduate and for MBA studies.

4.2 MBA Students with recognised credits are considered and supported through UCB's Undergraduate Bylaws. The University provides information relating to its approach to accreditation of prior credits through the Undergraduate Bylaw which allows a consistent admission process for students who wish to get credit and recognition for prior learning.

4.3 The MBA promotes gender equality by upholding various policies, including the Student Admission Policy and the Approval Admissions Policy, aimed at fostering an inclusive and diverse admission process. The University ensures that all applicants, regardless of age, gender, race, colour, religion, nationality, or ethnic origin, are admitted based on their demonstrated knowledge and competencies required for entry into specific disciplines. During the visit, it was highlighted that bursaries and scholarships are available for students. However, there is currently no clear indication of a policy addressing students with prior experiential learning though this is attributed to lack of government policy and direction.

4.4 The MBA course adheres to the Higher Education Council in terms of regulations, through ensuring their admission policies addressing the student life cycle are in line with regulations. The admission process is maintained by the Admission and Registration Unit and reviewed regularly. The University has a clear understanding of the student life cycle points. UCB also upholds a clear policy that supports students with special needs. During the students' meeting the admission process was emphasised as accessible and smooth.

4.5 All the information related to admission criteria, such as required forms and documents, is available in MBA Student Handbook. Processes are in place to enable smooth admission into academic programmes offered at UCB. This includes the Student Support Policy, the Special Needs Student Policy, and Admission Policy which provides a guide for UCB staff on Admission procedure and informs applicants of the admission process. The Program Specifications and Admission Brochure and bookmark provide a standard set of admissions' requirements and detail of the admissions' process. International students are also able to request support in various ways such as communicating with the Student Office at registration. International students are supported through programmes or brochures. The student catalogue is stored on the website. The University is currently in negotiations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) to have the UCB portal available to KSA MBA students for remote study.

4.6 UCB conducts a more personalised induction onto the MBA programme. This covers a range of topics such as an introduction to the faculty members, programme structure, assessments, useful contacts and project and thesis guidance. Students confirmed the induction to be purposeful and supportive of their transition from applicant to student.

4.7 Applicants to the MBA are required to have a minimum GPA of 2.0. Students select their course track during the admissions process, with the option to change it later as they progress through their studies. The MBA programme has a process in place to award certificates to students upon completion. MBA students must complete a thesis, which is subject to review and approval. Once the thesis has been approved, students receive their certificate to mark the completion of their degree.

4.8 The team concludes that admission processes, progression, recognising of prior learning, and arrangements for graduation align with Standard 1.4. The team therefore concludes that Standard 1.4 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 UCB's approach to staff recruitment and conditions of employment is evident in their Human Resources Policy and Procedures, and Faculty Guidebook. Together, the documents capture the University's approach to various aspects of HR, including staff recruitment and the ongoing conditions of employment including leave, which are directly applicable to those who are hired to teach on the MBA. The Faculty Guidebook also provides a range of relevant information to staff on the institution, including its mission and vision, governance, faculty benefits, and other aspects.

5.2 The team reviewed UCB's Policy and Procedures relating to recruitment and noted that this part of the document foregrounds ethical principles including those relating to anti-discrimination practices. The remainder of this document clearly articulates how the provider approaches the HR function and logically outlines other relevant processes underpinning the appointment of new staff, relating to application, shortlisting, and interview. Those shortlisted for academic positions also undertake a teaching demonstration which enables a more rounded evaluation of applicants' suitability for lecturing to be determined. The team formed the view that this would be particularly relevant to the recruitment of those teaching on the MBA, given that the MBA is UCB's only postgraduate offering, and is typically viewed as the flagship programme within a business school context.

5.3 The team considered how UCB approach staff induction activities. Material delivered as part of the induction process was reviewed. This included expectations for newly-appointed staff, consideration of different elements of the role (i.e. teaching, research and service – the breakdown of which is also detailed in the self-evaluation document), the nature of moderation and other aspects. While these materials were applicable institution-wide, they are also relevant to those recruited to teach on the MBA. The team sought further evidence relating to staff induction via oral testimony. This revealed that induction contains elements delivered at the institutional and departmental level, which for the purposes of those joining to teach on the MBA would involve the Business Administration department. UCB's induction covers a range of pertinent activities, including the organisational culture, quality assurance processes and how new staff should approach the design and evaluation of assessments. It was also affirmed that staff within the Business Administration department who teach on the MBA receive support from their Head of Department and through mentoring arrangements, as appropriate. At the visit, UCB's use of teaching observation also became clear during the meeting with MBA teaching staff. It was evident that this takes place throughout the academic year and involves the Head of Department reviewing the teaching of staff members over a 35–40-minute period. Teaching observations consider aspects such as syllabus alignment, classroom management and other pedagogical issues.

5.4 The team reviewed academic staff to student ratios on the MBA. Whilst the presence of part-time staff employed on a fractional basis meant that it was difficult to accurately determine these, at the level of the Business Administration department it was noted that there were currently 285 MBA students supported by 6 full-time and 3 part-time staff, indicating that staff to student ratios were likely around 1 staff member to 35-40 students. It was concluded that staff to student ratios were appropriate to the type of programme and were likely to encourage the development of stronger bonds and working relationships between the two groups.

5.5 Faculty workloads for those teaching on the MBA were also scrutinised. The team reviewed the Faculty Guidebook which details aspects of academic load, noting that those at professorial level undertake less teaching. It also considered this in further detail and reviewed the workloads of three staff members employed in the Department of Business Administration which delivers the MBA. A conclusion was drawn that the number of courses delivered by staff for the periods covered is reasonable. To ascertain the suitability of staff currently employed at UCB to deliver the MBA, detailed CVs from the nine permanent faculty within the Business Administration department were reviewed. This consisted of 1 Professor, 2 Associate Professors and 9 Assistant Professors. With one exception, all were qualified to doctoral level. The CVs provided evidence of staff within the department having an appropriate mix of relevant experience of teaching, industry experience, scholarly activity and research which was suited to the delivery of a Master's level programme with a vocational emphasis such as the MBA.

5.6 Turning to research and scholarly activity, it was noted by the team that research typically forms 20% of the staff workload at the University. Annual research reports are produced at the institutional level, and further examination of these reveals there have been some journal articles produced by those teaching on the MBA which have appeared in Scopus-indexed publications. Detail on a range of different conferences attended and other research activities undertaken by these staff members was also apparent in the sample Departmental Research Plan. The team explored in further detail how UCB supports research financially and was informed during the visit that there was a specific allocation for research in the budget. It was further noted in the self-evaluation document that, in line with HEC regulations, a minimum of 2% of the net profit is allocated to research. It was concluded that the institution actively supports staff in the furtherance of their research endeavours.

5.7 In terms of staff development for those teaching on the MBA, UCB has a dedicated policy relating to this, although it is not explicitly referred to in the Faculty Guidebook. The policy establishes that professional development is an ongoing activity and provides explicit links to the development of individual Professional Development Plans. The team therefore examined the Professional Development Plans of three faculty members who teach on the MBA and found evidence that these were used to identify suitable opportunities on an annual basis. Related to this, the team considered the University's approach to the annual review of faculty. The Faculty Performance Appraisal Policy indicates that faculty members agree annual goals in consultation with their Head of Department. The policy outlines the points-based approach that is then to be followed, in which various activities undertaken throughout the year (for example, student advising and counselling, teaching, research and scholarship, co-curricular activities) are weighted and can each attract a score. The resultant total 'performance rating,' which can be a maximum of 100, can then be used to determine whether a monetary reward is made to the staff member concerned (at the discretion of UCB management). Although complex, the team noted that UCB offered staff orientation relating to the policy via a dedicated workshop.

5.8 Further evidence relating to staff development was provided via oral testimony during the visit: it was explained in the meeting with the senior management team how the process was enacted, including in relation to budgetary approval. The meeting with MBA teaching staff revealed a range of examples of how the professional development of staff was enacted at UCB, including support for higher research degree study and to enable attendance at conferences.

5.9 The team also considered how UCB supports innovation in teaching and the adoption of new technologies. It was noted that workshops had been offered to staff, including on subjects such as research informed teaching and on project/thesis supervision. From the site visit, it was evident that teaching spaces were well equipped for the teaching of MBA students. This demonstrated that appropriate technology (e.g. in computer laboratories) was in place which would help students in their learning. The team formed the view, however,

that there was scope to do more to encourage innovation in teaching methods and **recommends** UCB consider opportunities for continuous professional development for those teaching on the MBA which encourage innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies in teaching and assessment.

5.10 In summary, the team confirms that UCB has established clear, transparent, and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching and that it offers suitable opportunities for the professional development of teaching staff. Scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research is also apparent. Therefore, 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 MBA Students are offered a wide range of student support covering all aspects of the student journey; managed by the Student Affairs and Alumni Office (SAAO). Each team under the SAAO focuses on student wellbeing, academic support, providing opportunities for extracurricular activities, and supporting students with additional needs. Students are also provided with training around the tools needed to support their learning, such as software, and learning environment literacy, at induction.

6.2 The MBA adheres to the regulations set forth by the HEC concerning the sufficiency of its physical infrastructure through its Occupational Health and Safety Policy. HEC officers conduct regular on-the-spot inspections to verify compliance with cleanliness, adequacy, and suitability of standards of the University's facilities and physical infrastructure. Furthermore, the HEC mandates comprehensive evidence of plans and actions regarding both academic and administrative resources within the University.

6.3 The University has further expanded its amenities for MBA students by entering into agreements with external entities. The team saw a contract with the Malaeb Club granting students access to sporting facilities and an additional agreement with the American Mission Hospital (AMH) to ensure access to a first aid room. Furthermore, UCB has signed an agreement with a permanent nurse to enhance healthcare services on campus.

6.4 UCB has two separate surveys for students, a Student Course Evaluation Survey covering course organisation, course content, course instructor and teaching, and a Student Satisfaction Survey covering dissemination of information, counselling/advising, support services, student complaints and grievances. MBA student feedback on courses is gathered through Student Course Evaluation Feedback Questionnaire by the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office, with support from the IT Department which administers the survey for both undergraduate and postgraduate students. This survey gathers feedback on various aspects, including overall satisfaction with the course quality, organisation, learning opportunities, and the availability of ICT resources. UCB gives importance to the maintenance of its resources and the overall responsibility lies with the Director of HR and Administration. During the students meeting, students showed awareness and use of all the different ways of providing feedback

6.5 UCB provides comprehensive support for MBA students throughout the student life cycle with clear mechanisms in place. A part-time student counsellor addresses psychological, social, personal, and academic issues and a Counsellor Contract is issued. Instructors refer at risk MBA students using the Student Referral Form. Individual counselling sessions are arranged, and outcomes documented confidentially. The university also has a Special Needs Student Policy for identifying and supporting students with special needs, with counsellor recommendations shared by the Admission and Registration Unit (ARU) with relevant directors or Head of Department. At risk MBA students are identified using the Academic Advising and At-Risk Policy and later a personalised intervention strategy is implemented by academics.

6.6 In accordance with the Student Support Policy, MBA students have the opportunity to lodge a formal complaint by completing and submitting a designated Student Complaint Form.

6.7 The team learned that UCB laboratories are accessible from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, allowing MBA students to make use of them beyond their scheduled classes. This enables students to work on in-course projects and devise solutions for their graduation projects at their convenience.

6.8 MBA Students receive training to make full use of the learning tools provided, which include various software applications, research components and support for developing software literacy. Additionally, students receive personalised feedback on assessments and have opportunities for one-on-one discussions with lecturers about academic topics. The library and the student lounge extended its hours to include Saturdays, specifically to accommodate MBA students, in response to their feedback.

6.9 The team was informed MBA students have the chance to participate in research days, where they can present their thesis and earn the opportunity to speak at conferences. They are also encouraged to attend international conferences and collaborate with other students on research papers.

6.10 MBA orientation sessions, led by UCB academic and administrative staff, play a pivotal role in introducing students to essential support services and familiarizing them with pertinent rules and regulations crucial for their successful journey at UCB. Moreover, the MBA Bylaws facilitate academic advising, enabling early identification and follow-up of at-risk students MBA Program Bylaws. Each faculty posts their work schedule clearly on their office door indicating teaching and service hours.

6.11 In conclusion, UCB offers excellent, responsive, and personalised support to its MBA students. A variety of activities and resources are available to aid students' academic development, including workshops on soft skills and extracurricular events. The dedication of the staff to providing personalised support is sufficient. The team concludes that Standard 1.6, which relates to 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 UCB has set up a clear method for accurate data and information gathering and management to enhance its performance as well as assist in the decision-making process, identifying trends and anticipating challenges. Data collected about the academic programmes also helps in monitoring academic performance, faculty recruitment and aligning with accreditation standards.

7.2 Data collected at UCB on the programme level can be classified as

- Programme information
- Academic staff information
- Administrative staff information
- Students' information
- Surveys (staff, students, employers, alumni)

7.3 UCB manages this system through an advanced system that includes: One Drive portal and a student information system (LOGSIS).

7.4 The MBA programme manages and organises their information annually to include the following:

- Academic planning framework
- Programme Specifications folder (with programme evaluation report)
- Course Files specification folder (for every course there is Course specification, CILOs Sheet, Internal and external Moderations, NQF allocation sheet, Course evaluation report, etc.)
- Faculty workload, schedules for courses and exams,
- Industrial Advisory Board (IAB)
- Scientific Research Council (SRC)

7.5 During the visit, the team noted that the MBA programme makes use of the data collected at programme level by analysing it, for example comparing the registration and admission statistics for the MBA programme AY20-21 up to Fall of AY23-24. Yet, the programme did not provide any evidence of actions or decision taken based on this analysis. The team **recommends** the MBA programme develop enhanced analysis tools and use these to develop thematic reports that inform the decision-making process.

7.6 The team learned the IT unit offers orientation and training to how to use the UCB portal. In addition, all faculty members, staff and students stated they receive support they need from the IT department. New faculty are informed of the system during induction and via a demonstration. The IT department offers support through email and all problems are addressed.

7.7 Other activities, recorded on the system, include access to admission, registration, study plans, and posting grades. Grades are posted by Admissions and approved by the HOD. There is a systematic way to ensure that all student's results and grades are accurately recorded, approved, and reported in a secure, and timely manner. Instructors record their results using a unique username and password under the grading section of the portal.



7.8 The system operates an allotted time frame for entering the results, then locks the results in when the instructor presses the 'Accept' button. The instructor is unable to access and amend submitted grades. The system accepts marks with the Letter Grade automated by the system and GPA is also calculated automatically. Each department can access its concerned folder to manage information related to it. Some data and folders can be accessed by all members of staff while other data is restricted.

7.9 UCB enforces a high level of academic integrity and does not tolerate misconduct. There is a Plagiarism Policy, and the University has adopted Turnitin. Students are made aware of the policy at the beginning of each class and the policy is enforced. UCB submitted several samples of Student work and Turnitin check. The team learned that students have opportunities to resubmit work prior to official deadlines if Turnitin flags up high similarity rates.

7.10 Microsoft Teams is used for learning management system (LMS). The team asked for a live demonstration and UCB accommodated this request and were given the chance to view different types of operations both on Teams and on the Portal. Based on the request and suggestion of the faculty members, UCB is in the process of finalizing Moodle connection which will be deployed next Academic Year.

7.11 During the live demonstration, the team was able to see how student data is entered by admission. Students are required to submit all their documents as hard copies. Advisors are added on the system so that they can follow up with the students. Student study plans is also administered on the portal. This was followed by a live demonstration of the Microsoft Teams site, where all LMS is administered, course files, assignments, formal assessment, course work and grades.

7.12 There is a systematic way for handling surveys to gather quantitative data. UCB has a list of surveys which are set up using Google Forms. QAAO oversees the schedule, dissemination, and follow-up of the surveys.

7.13 In summary, the team finds that the MBA programme complies with UCB regulations for data collection and management and that the programme has started analysing some of this data and are using it to further enhance their activities.

7.14 Based on the evidence provided the 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 There is a range of information available on the UCB's website. However there is an absence of a website policy or website maintenance checklist. The team noted the Admission Policy was not available online, along with the absence of some other policies. With these gaps and the appearance of error pages, there is a concern for the transparency of information to all students.

8.2 In addition to the public information on the UCB website, students are provided an MBA Handbook which provides sufficient information to prospective and current students about UCB programmes.

8.3 During orientation, UCB shows students where and how to access various types of information and platforms, policies, and procedures during their studies. UCB also shares the Student Handbook. This was clear from the meeting with students, where there was awareness of some policies and procedures across the student body. Students described an understanding of where to access information and support even if the website did not contain the policies and procedures.

8.4 Although the University does not have a Personal Data Protection Policy which acts to protect personal data and informs students of how UCB handles personal data, the college uses various social media channels to communicate with both prospective and current students. During the team meeting with students, they expressed appreciation for the University's social media accounts, saying that they provide up-to-date information, news about activities, and prompt communication. MBA students find WhatsApp and email especially useful for staying informed about changes to their courses. They mentioned that the MBA team maintains consistent and direct communication with them. Additionally, the MBA website and academic calendar are regularly updated.

8.5 The student handbook provides clear, accurate, objective, up-to date, and readily accessible information to prospective and current students, as well as other stakeholders. However, the UCB website does not contain up to date information, therefore the team **recommends** UCB establish a website management policy to support the maintenance of the website.

8.6 The information provided demonstrates a transparent and accurate picture of UCB as a higher education provider, its programmes, policies, and procedures. The team therefore concludes that 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 UCB has a system to regularly review and monitor its programmes, ensuring their content remains updated and in line with market demands and student requirements. This involves an annual internal review of the MBA programme, an external review every four years, in addition to benchmarking, and stakeholder feedback.

9.2 The QAAO oversees the annual review process, as outlined in the Quality Manual. Internal review is conducted every year. It aligns with Higher Education Council's (HEC) annual review standards and emphasizes the evaluation and improvement of quality. In addition, 25% of the courses of the MBA are sent for external review every year. The internal review report draws from various sources including end-of-semester course reviews, student attendance, progression rates, student input, alumni and employer surveys, internal and external moderation reports, IQA Audits, as well as discussions in IAB and BA Academic Department meetings. The MBA programme is reviewed externally every four years and reviews must consider market needs and have both Bahraini and international review perspectives.

9.3 The detailed internal and external quality assurance processes start with identifying national and international standards. These standards help the Business Administration (BA) department and the MBA programme (through the programme director), set operational plans and revisit its improvement plan. The internal quality assurance process is set and monitored by the QAAO as described in the Quality Manual, and the BA Department is responsible for the implementation. The self-evaluation report is drafted and reviewed by the internal and external reviewers. Then the BA department creates an enhancement plan based on the comments of the reviewers.

9.4 The University carries out rigorous programme reviews, and auditing procedures that are conducted and analysed by the QAAO and suggestions are communicated to the BA department for deployment. All aspects are captured in annual review reports. These reports, as indicated by the faculty members during the meetings, are discussed in the faculty meetings. In addition, the reports are reviewed by LTARC where all the improvement actions are discussed, and corrective actions are suggested. It is the HOD's responsibility to monitor the implementation of these actions. The BA Department works towards continuous improvement of the quality of delivering the MBA programme. The department considers the feedback from various stakeholders which is captured in the Annual Monitoring and Review Report and the Annual Improvement Plan.

9.5 To facilitate the reporting procedure, the annual programme monitoring, and review report template was amended to allow the HODs to record the accomplishments of the identified improvement actions in the same template.

9.6 The Annual Monitoring Review has been implemented since AY 2021- 2022 to ensure the MBA is fit for purpose and complies with the regulations. The BA Department also regularly discusses the Program Expected Outcomes (PEOs), Program Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), and programme aim with external stakeholders through Industrial

Advisory Board (IAB) meetings. This helps to ensure that the MBA is up-to-date and tailored to market needs.

9.7 Another method for monitoring and review of programmes deployed at UCB is benchmarking, outlined in the Benchmarking Policy. The MBA programme carries out a holistic benchmark during the periodic review to enhance the quality of the academic content. During the meetings with leadership and faculty, benchmarking was underlined as being of high importance and the University conducts it at every level - local, national, and international. The team was informed of a formal benchmarking agreement with a Jordanian University that would be finalised soon. Locally, an arrangement has been made with Al Ahlia University, and discussions are underway with institutions in Hong Kong. Other informal benchmarking is conducted with University of Bahrain, as well as universities in UK and the USA.

9.8 The Self Evaluation Document (SED) described the benchmarking process for the Digital Media programme. This was conducted in AY 2021/22 as an example for the process that UCB implements in all its programmes. The team learned that the same process is applied to the MBA.

9.9 UCB conducted several bench marking studies for the MBA. The evidence submitted for the benchmarking and review processes of the MBA included four reports. In February 2020, the MBA in Islamic Finance study plan was benchmarked with two accredited universities: International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and University of Bolton, UK. The study plan of the MBA was also benchmarked with three accredited universities: University of Bahrain (UOB), University of Jordan (UOJ), University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (UCCS). In February 2021, the MBA admission criteria was benchmarked with other local universities. Finally, in July 2021, the study plan of MBA in Banking and Finance was benchmarked with two accredited universities: Swiss Business School (SBS) in UAE and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM).

9.10 Accordingly, the Benchmarking committee arrived at the following recommendations:

- Reduce the credit hours for the programme from 42 to 36 credit hours.
- The number of UCB Business Department PILOs must be reduced.
- The wording of each learning outcome must be carefully written in shed of the NQF levels and descriptors.
- More focus should be on the thinking skills, and general and transferrable skills.

9.11 External review is conducted periodically through national and international agencies. During the meetings with faculty members, it was clear to that faculty were aware of the annual and periodic reviews, and several faculty members have been present in the last such reviews. Alumni attested to the fact that they were informed of all the changes to the MBA.

9.12 In summary, the team found sufficient evidence that the University has established the necessary tools and mechanisms for the periodic review of its programmes.

9.13 The team concludes that standard 1.9 On-going 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 UBC is committed to the quality of its educational programmes and processes by adhering to and aligning with, local and international standards. This commitment is achieved by applying to several local, regional, and international quality assurance and accreditation agencies. This commitment stems out from the conviction that international recognition and accreditation will make them one of the leading Bahraini institutions.

10.2 This commitment to the quality of educational programmes is also true for the MBA which has been reviewed on the local level by the Bahrain Education and Training Quality Authority (BQA), on the regional level by the and Quality Assurance Commission of Higher Education Institutions in Jordan (AQACHIE) and internationally the current submission for the International Programme Accreditation from the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

10.3 The team noted that the MBA programme adheres to a cyclical review process that starts with the internal quality assurance framework that is aligned with the required standards. This then results in the self-evaluation report that is then submitted to external review. Once the external review reports and recommendations is received, the MBA programme puts forward its enhancement and improvement plans that will in turn inform the internal quality framework.

10.4 The team learned that the MBA is periodically reviewed by the BQA. UCB also submitted its MBA programme for accreditation by AQACHEI (Jordan) and currently they are awaiting the report. In addition, the programme is preparing its improvement plan to address the BQA requirements and prepare for the next submission.

10.5 The MBA programme is committed to all revision cycles of the BQA. Furthermore, the QAAO collaborates with the BA department to prepare the improvement plans that have been sent to the BQA and HEC for both the BSc- BA and the MBA.

10.6 The MBA demonstrated compliance with the recommendations and feedback from the external evaluations. The team learned that the MBA program has submitted its enhancement plan and that they continuously make changes and improvements. In addition, UCB developed its Quality Assurance Policy and started addressing the ESG Standard 1.8 - Public Information which did not form part of any of the other accreditation requirements undertaken.

10.7 Furthermore, the benchmarking activities are evidence of the commitment of the BA department that the MBA content is updated, fit for purpose and that it is aligned to international good practice.

10.8 The conviction of MBA faculty members and MBA students is that regional and international accreditation is a great asset for the visibility of the University and student recruitment. Graduate students indicated that they benefited from the programmes and that accreditation was also an asset for them in the work field. The increasing numbers of the current MBA intake as a result of the recognition by the Saudi authorities is proof of this conviction.

10.9 The above commitment in addition to the current submission provides ample evidence that the MBA programme is committed to undergoing cyclical external quality assurance reviews. Although the outcome of some of these visits might not always be positive (e.g.

BQA recent review outcomes.) the team is of the opinion that improvement plans are put in place and acted upon.

10.10 Based on the evidence provided, the Team 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 a proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

### Condition

Conditions set out action that is required. Conditions are only used with unsatisfactory judgements where the quality cannot be approved. Conditions may be used where quality or standards are at risk/continuing risk if action is not taken or if a required standard is not met and action is needed for it to be met.

### 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](http://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 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.

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