QAA GLOBAL

CERTIFICATE OF ACCREDITATION

This is to certify that

University College of Bahrain

is accredited by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
for the successful completion of the International Quality Review and meeting the
Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Accreditation valid: 23/07/2025 – 22/07/2030

Vicki Stott, Chief Executive, QAA

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

University College of Bahrain

Action Plan to Address the Comments and Recommendations of QAA for the IQR Report

The final comment of QAA was as follows:

- The team found three examples of good practice and made seven 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 practices which are operating satisfactorily but which could be improved or enhanced. The team identified one condition that the University must satisfy to achieve QAA accreditation.

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following 7 **recommendations** to University College of Bahrain.
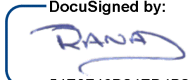
- UCB develops a more comprehensive and effective dissemination plan to engage more participation in a wider range of formats, for example webinars, brown-bag lunches, and FAQ sites. (Standard 1.1. **[para 1.16].)**

- UCB establishes a log of all informal and formal complaints (including those that are pending and resolved) so that any issues can be adequately captured centrally and subsequently acted upon. (Standard 1.3 **[para 3.6]**.)

- Consider how UCB can encourage further pedagogical innovation through the adoption of a suitable documented and embedded approach. (Standard 1.5 **[para 5.10]**.)

- UCB develops a comprehensive policy and procedure to cover student health and wellbeing, including systems for identifying and addressing challenges that go beyond academic risks (Standard 1.6 **[para 6.16]**.)

- UCB establishes a website management policy to support the maintenance of the website (Standard 1.8 **[para 8.5]**.)

- UCB develops stronger commitment and follow through on the action plans resulting from external quality reviews to ensure rigour in the assurance of sustainable programme improvement (Standard 1.10 **[para 10.12]**.)

- UCB reaches a strategic decision on the degree of external recognition that is aligned with their strategic objectives, to reduce the challenges posed by accreditation fatigue (Standard 1.10 **[para 10.13**.)

- The team of QAA sets the following condition; that UCB review the newly developed Quality Assurance Policy to ensure its fitness for purpose in guiding the institution 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. (ESG standard 1.1)
- Overall, the team concluded that University College of Bahrain **meets** all the standards for International Quality Review **subject to meeting specific conditions.**

UCB reviewed the report of QAA about institutional accreditation (IQR) and proposes the following action plan, taking into consideration the recommendations and comments, that will be finalized before May 2025.

Approved by: University College Council (UCC): Minutes of Meeting Number 1 for 2024/2025 Dated 5 September 2024.

 Dr. Rana Sawaya – UCB President

Signature:
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Date: 9/11/2024

Definitions

UCB – University College of Bahrain
UCC – University College Council
QAAO – Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office
QAAC – Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee
LTARC – Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Review Committee
HoD – Head of Department
IAB – Industry Advisory Board
MPRC - Marketing and Public Relations Committee
IT – Information Technology
SSU – Student Support Unit
CEU – Community Engagement Unit
MoM – Minutes of Meeting

Standard 1.1 Policy for quality assurance: Not met					
QAA Comments or recommendations	**Proposed action(s)**	**Responsibility for action**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of successful implementation**	**Completion Date**
1.5- The Quality Assurance Policy outlines the internal quality assurance system to consist of academic programme evaluation, administrative evaluation processes, and subcontracted activities [102], Yet the practice of internal quality assurance within UCB is focused on the academic programmes with very little evidence seen to demonstrate the continuous review of the administrative processes, nor the overall administration of any other process within UCB.	QAAO currently practices a continuous review including all administrative departments. All committees and administrative departments work as per the QAA policies. QAAO will deliver more evidence to demonstrate the continuous review of the administrative process (HR, Students services, Media) QAAO will expand the quality assurance framework to include administrative processes. UCB will update the membership of the quality assurance committee to involve representatives from the administrative departments	President, Administrative departments, QAAO Revised Quality Assurance Framework which includes administrative processes Evidence of the updated Quality Assurance Committee	1 month	Reports, Procedures of continuous review of administrative processes	March 2025

1.10 the team recommends UCB develop an operational plan that is guided by both the Quality Assurance Policy and aligned with the strategic plan, with annual targets and tasks, identifying the parties responsible for carrying out these tasks, the due dates, and conducting periodic evaluation and assessment for its processes.	UCB has an operational plan in place with annual targets and tasks, identifying the parties responsible for these tasks, and the due dates. UCB will review this operational plan to include the periodic evaluation and assessment for its processes which is guided by the QA policy and the UCB strategic plan.	All academic and administrative departments, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC) QAAO	2 months	Developed Operational Plan	November 2024
1.15- In the composition of all committees, there is a student representative of staff and students. [M2, M3, M4,] Yet the students who attended the meetings were not aware of the existence of such a practice nor were they aware of the results (only one student did acknowledge the QA committee without really reflecting on that). [M3]	As per the policy and the practice, QAAO organizes meetings with the student representatives in the committees. However, the closing-up of the loop will be followed up to continues the process of improvement with inclusion of students' perspectives. UCB will provide orientation sessions for student representatives to explain their roles, responsibilities, and the importance of their contributions. UCB will ensure that student representatives receive regular updates about committee activities and outcomes (e.g. via emails, WhatsApp group).	Student Affairs and Alumni Office Student representative, Departments, QAAO	1 month	Meetings with student's representative, Activity Report for the orientation session for students	October 2024

1.16 the team found that the evidence provided was for presentations of two workshops and the attendance sheet for the NQF workshop showed only eight attendees. The team recommends (2) that UCB develop a more comprehensive and effective dissemination plan to engage more participation in a wider range of formats, for example webinars, brown-bag lunches, and FAQ sites.	A comprehensive plan will be developed to engage more participation including WS, Webinars, etc. and to extend this plan to all stakeholders (Staff, Students, Alumni). QAAO will work in coordination with Student Affairs and Alumni Unit () & Community Engagement Unit (CEU) to organize activities and increase the number of workshops about QA, National Qualification Framework (NQF), and accreditation.	SSU, CEU, QAAO	1 month	Workshop activity report, attendance sheet	March 2025
1.17 UCB deploys surveys to guarantee the involvement of faculty members, students, and external stakeholders such as employers, alumni. [129, 2.1] Although this is standard practice, the team noted that some surveys did not meet the participation ratio targeted and is also of the opinion there is insufficient involvement particularly of the external stakeholders. **[Appendix 1]** The provided evidence was of the results and final analyses and reflected a high degree of satisfaction with low marginal differences. However, some of the submitted evidence included statements from student surveys in the employers' survey; thus, questioning the integrity, validity, and reliability of these reports.	UCB will improve stakeholder engagement by using diverse channels to reach a broader range of stakeholders and ensure multiple inputs, UCB will also enhance communication strategies to encourage greater participation from faculty, students, and external stakeholders.	All Departments, IT, QAAO,	Done	List of surveys, Survey analysis for 2023-2024 Documentation of recorded feedback	September 2024

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1.21 Further, there was no clear evidence of how intolerance or discrimination are reflected in the policies towards faculty members or administration staff.	UCB has established a new Gender, Diversity, and Equality Policy that acknowledges the significance of diversity and is dedicated to ensuring equal opportunities for everyone. The policy aims to cultivate an inclusive culture where differences are embraced, and discrimination is not accepted. It details our commitment to gender equality, diversity, and the creation of a respectful and supportive environment. New Policies have been developed at UCB about Harassment, inequality and intolerance.	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC), QAAO, UCC	Done	New Gender, Diversity and Equality Policy	June 2024
1.23- In addition, it was observed that course reports are not reflective and simply document maintenance of the status quo via checklists. There are no clear explanations to the exam results in some of the courses evidenced (for example in one course, the results were reported to be normal distribution where clearly it was skewed 73.4% A, A-). [123 –06, 204]. The library audit [119] is simply a check list of the available books for the courses.	QAAO will test the effectiveness of the internal audit process and the internal moderation process that will ensure the quality of the documents uploaded in the end-course report. In addition, a training workshop is put in plan about CILOs assessment and end of course report. The QAAO will also work with the library representatives in deploying the new Library audit analysis, which includes information about the activities of the library (Visitors:	For End of Course report, a WS will be organized by QAAO to all academic staff during October 2024 For the Library: QAAO, Librarian, LITC, UCC	October 2024	Presentation with examples Audit report for library Revised Library Audit Report Updated End of Course Report Template	March 2025

	Students, Staff, Community, Internet access, etc.) UCB will revise End of Course Reports to move beyond checklists by incorporating detailed insights that evaluate the effectiveness of teaching methods, student performance, and learning outcomes. UCB will ensure that faculty would analyse and explain patterns such as skewed grade distributions and propose potential improvements. UCB will enhance the peer review process by having colleagues review course reports to ensure accuracy, clarity, and depth of reflection. UCB will incorporate a comprehensive evaluation of the library's resources which would include assessing the relevance, currency, and adequacy of the materials in relation to the courses they support.	Library and IT Committee (LITC)			

1.24- The team found no evidence that the results and recommendations of the surveys are incorporated into the revisions and improvement of courses. 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, no tangible evidence that this advice was incorporated in the plans was found.	As stated earlier, Stakeholders survey inputs are considered as one of the inputs in the annual evaluation process in the published annual review report. Actions incorporate inputs from direct and indirect measures such as the stakeholders' inputs. Such actions will be communicated to the stakeholders. This communication will be formalized through updating the current policy related to stakeholders' surveys. QAAO in collaboration with HoDs will ensure that the recommendation is taken in consideration with tangible evidence QAAO in collaboration with HoDs will ensure that stakeholder feedback is reviewed, discussed and documented in appropriate platforms such as Department Council meeting agenda and/or any other relevant channel. Departments will document any changes made to courses due to survey recommendations. This	HoDs, Staff, QAAO, UCC	Throughout the academic year	Survey Analysis Reports	Continuous

	documentation should show how feedback has been integrated into the curriculum.				
1.25- Employers who attended the stakeholder meeting [M3 of the IPA] attested to the quality of UCB graduates. However, they voiced concerns about the level of practical skills and competencies that the programmes equip them with. At the same time, they reflected that they were never asked to submit their opinion on their satisfaction with the programmes, and their role on the IAB was limited to questions about the content of the courses and programmes. This is one of the challenges that was stated during the meetings and the team heard that that QAAO is addressing this by developing an alumni office and securing more external stakeholder connections. [M8] The team finds that there is limited feedback that is gathered from the stakeholders and recommends (3) that UCB designs a more robust tool for stakeholder feedback that would have an impact on the academic development of the programme.	UCB will develop a more robust feedback survey for Employers and the last meetings of IAB for the three departments during June 2024 took this recommendation in consideration and HoDs insisted on the major role of IAB in analyzing Programmes objectives and LOs and about the development of these programmes. Regarding the practical skills, it is discussed among the department team and was reinforced in several projects within the program.	HoDs, IABs, QAAO	June 2024	IABs Meetings, HoDs presentations in the meeting, Recommendations	Done and continuous

1.29 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. [M5] This was attributed to the fact that the new Quality Assurance Policy has only been in effect since January 2024. [M8]	The newly approved Quality Assurance Policy at UCB will be 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. Besides, QAAO currently practices a continuous review including all administrative departments. All committees and administrative departments work as per the QAA policies. QAAO will deliver more evidence to demonstrate the continuous review of the administrative process (HR, Students services, Media)	QAAO, HoDs, Director of Administrative departments, UCC	Dec 2024	More detailed QA Policy. Systematic internal review report	February 2025 and continuous
1.30- The team acknowledges the approval of a Quality Assurance Policy in January 2024; it has not seen evidence of how such a policy informs Strategic Planning. Though it is further acknowledged that a new Strategic plan is currently under development, UCB evidencing the link between policy and planning would give confidence	UCB is implementing the newly developed Quality Assurance Policy to ensure its fitness for purpose in guiding the institution 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	QAAO, HoDs, UCC, QAAC, all Committees Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee	January 2025	Reviewed QA Policy	March 2025

that a systemic approach to QA is being implemented.	foster a culture of quality. (ESG standard 1.1) UCB will create a document that explicitly links elements of the QA policy to the objectives and strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan. It will show how specific QA principles and procedures inform the development as well as the execution of strategic goals.				

Standard 1.2   Design and approval of programmes: Met

QAA Comments or recommendations	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Completion Date
No Comments or recommendations					

Standard 1.3   Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment: Met

QAA Comments or recommendations	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Completion Date
3.6- The team considered UCB's policy and procedures in relation to complaints. The Student Grievance and Appeal Policy [8.1] which deals with academic and non-academic complaints was reviewed, as well as the associated Student Complaint Form. [665] The process utilised by UCB is clear and easy-to-follow with a three-stage process leading	UCB will establish a log of all informal and formal complaints (including pending and resolved) so that any issues can be adequately	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) Student Affairs and Alumni Unit	October 2024	Log sample including formal and informal complaints	November 2024

potentially to consideration by the University Appeal Committee. The meeting with staff from academic support teams [M5] demonstrated 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.	captured centrally and then acted on. The responsible Unit will be assigned to manage formal and informal complaints.	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee			
3.14- The team explored how UCB approaches the management of mitigating circumstances students may have when undertaking assessment, as the Assessment and Moderation Policy [324] does not cover mitigating circumstances. Although it was evident from oral testimony that individual students 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. [314]	UCB will develop a Mitigating Circumstances Policy which covers all instances where students' completion of assessment may be impacted. UCB will update the Assessment and Moderation Policy to include the process for mitigating circumstances to address such instances.	QAAO, QAAC, HoDs, UCC	December 2024	Revised Assessment and Moderation Policy	February 2025

Standard 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification: Met					
QAA Comments or recommendations	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Completion Date
4.3- The team explored the credit system used by UCB and found that students with recognised credits are considered and supported through UCB's Undergraduate Bylaws. [401] The University provides information relating to accreditation of prior credits through the Undergraduate Bylaw [401] allowing for the consistent admission of students. In line with government policy, there is currently no policy for addressing students with prior experiential learning.	UCB will develop a policy for prior experiential learning, when it is officially approved and accepted by the Bahraini Authorities	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) Quality Assurance and Accreditation Committee (QAAC)	February 2025	New Prior Experiential Learning Policy	Based upon the acceptance of prior learning by Bahraini Authorities
4.13- Student feedback on individual services is covered in an overall satisfaction survey and data can be extracted from the course evaluation survey. However, there is no specific survey targeted to further understand student feedback on certain points of the student life cycle. [M2, M3, M5]	Student's exist survey covers all the aspects of student life at UCB UCB will Review this survey and extend more the questions about Student life	Quality Assurance and Accreditation Office (QAAO) Student Affairs and Alumni Unit (SAAU)	February 2025	Revised Student Exit Survey	March 2025

Standard 1.5	Teaching staff: Met				
QAA Comments or recommendations	**Proposed action(s)**	**Responsibility for action**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of successful implementation**	**Completion Date**
5.1- The team formed the view, however, that there was scope to do more to encourage innovation in teaching methods, such as further emphasis on authentic assessment and on the adoption of appropriate technology in the classroom.	The department met with the QAAO office to consider the group of recommendations related to teaching and assessment. Actions were put in place to enhance further pedagogical innovation.	HoDs, Staff, UCC, QAAO	Continuous	HoD, Staff feedback	Continuous

Standard 1.6	Learning resources and student support: Met				
QAA Comments or recommendations	**Proposed action(s)**	**Responsibility for action**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of successful implementation**	**Completion Date**
6.13 Students showed satisfaction of the process of using learning resources and student support, however there is an absence of the evaluation of the learning resources and student support management.	The current implemented student survey includes Questions about their satisfaction on Learning resources. UCB will update the student survey to include support management.	QAAO, HoDs, UCC	October 2024	Updated student survey which includes support management	End of semester

| 6.16- there is a lack of policy and procedure addressing student health and wellbeing in the current policy framework. | UCB will develop a comprehensive policy and procedures to cover student health and wellbeing, including systems for identifying and addressing challenges that go beyond academic risks. | HoDs, Staff, UCC, QAAO | October 2024 | adapted policy | December 2024 |

Standard 1.7 Information management: Met					
QAA Comments or recommendations	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Completion Date
7.14- UCB gathers all types of information such as the results of surveys, but no evidence was seen to support how this information is tabulated and analysed. There were no trend analyses nor forecasts. During meetings, the team probed the faculty and staff to elaborate on how they were using the system in their decision making, yet there were no clear or consistent answers beyond a general affirmation that this was done. Moreover, there was not enough evidence to support the institution in understanding its trends, refining its recruitment strategies or other strategic decisions.	UCB is developing a periodic systematic reporting policy to utilize this data systematically in decision-making processes. This will be developed with the management team, as approvals are needed very closely to develop all the information and reports needed for decision making.	QAAO, LITC, UCC	Nov 2024	Systematic Reporting Policy	March 2025

Standard 1.8	Public information: Met				
QAA Comments or recommendations	**Proposed action(s)**	**Responsibility for action**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of successful implementation**	**Completion Date**
8.4 UCB does not have a Personal Data Protection Policy which acts to protect personal data and informs students of how UCB handles personal data.	UCB is developing a personal Data Protection Policy to protect personal Data	QAAO, QAAC, UCC	October 2024	Personal Data Protection Policy	November 2024
8.5 The team notes that there is an absence of a website policy or for example a website maintenance checklist to ensure the website is functional, maintained and up to date.	UCB has developed an information policy including the management of the Website. A new website is developed, and the Website is revised using the process in this policy	QAAO, MPRC, UCC	June 2024	New Public Information policy	Done

Standard 1.9	On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes: Met				
QAA Comments or recommendations	**Proposed action(s)**	**Responsibility for action**	**Timeline**	**Evidence of successful implementation**	**Completion Date**
9.6- The evidence provided in the MoMs [125, 030] in which the results were discussed reflected no apparent impact on the development of the teaching and learning strategies. This finding reflects what has been stated in Standard 1.1 earlier.	This is part of the documentation process, since teaching and learning strategies are part of most of the meetings. However, UCB will reflect clearly in its documentation how	All Departments & Units QAAO, UCC	Nov 2024	New Operational Plans	December 2024

	discussions and actions are taken. For this reason, a secretary is assigned for the meetings.				
9.12 External review is conducted periodically through national and international agencies. UCB has been accredited by HEC [1013] and the AQACHEI [054- 055]. Yet there is no strategic consensus regarding the latter and whether reaccreditation will be pursued.	UCB has a strong commitment regarding the reaccreditation at National level (BQA) and International (QAA). The coming strategic plan will identify the roadmap regarding international accreditation.	UCC, QAAO, QAAC	September 2024	Reaccreditation strategy	October 2024
9.17- the team found sufficient evidence that the University has established the necessary tools and mechanisms for the periodic review of its programmes. However, the team is of the opinion that more can be done to ensure the measures taken have a clear impact on the enhancement of the academic programmes and the quality of learning.	UCB will utilize the employer survey more efficiently and the IAB inputs to obtain measures (priorly defined) to reflect on the clear impact on the enhancement of the academic programmes and the quality of learning	HoD, Departments, UCC, QAAC	September 2024	New measures to enhance academic programmes	Continuous

Standard 1.10	Cyclical external quality assurance: Met				
QAA Comments or recommendations	Proposed action(s)	Responsibility for action	Timeline	Evidence of successful implementation	Completion Date
10.12- UCB is committed to undergoing cyclical external quality assurance reviews. However, the outcome of some of these visits might not always be positive. The status from the BQA is a case in point. Yet the examination of the reports and improvement plans that were submitted reveals that UCB is working on the development of improvement plans	UCB develops stronger commitment and follow through on the action plans resulting from external quality reviews to ensure rigour in the assurance of sustainable programme improvement.	HoD, QAAC, QAAO, UCC	March 2025	UCB Progress Reports for BQA	Continuous
10.13- The team also questioned the diversity of the selected accreditation agencies and whether UCB had any strategic plans regarding the pursuit of further accreditation. It was specifically concerned with the degree of accreditation fatigue and challenges that UCB was facing. Since the University is in the process of developing its next strategic plan, this is particularly relevant for future practice [M1] and as indicated earlier, there is no strategic consensus as to whether there is an intention to pursue other regional accreditation. The review team recommends that UCB reaches a strategic decision on the degree of external recognition that is aligned with their strategic objectives and reduces the challenges posed by accreditation fatigue.	UCB is developing a new strategic plan that identifies the roadmap for accreditation and recognition purposes. The accreditation fatigue will be considered and reduced.	UCC, QAAC, QAAO	September 2024	Roadmap for accreditation and recognition	Continuous

-End of the Document-