Al Hussein Fund for Excellence

Subject Overview Report

Business Administration Programmes in Seven Universities in Jordan

January 2004
Subject Review of Business Administration

Assessing the quality of education

The business administration programmes at seven Jordanian universities were reviewed under the auspices of the Hussein Fund for Excellence (HFE), together with support from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the UK. The HFE was established in 1999 with the mission of promoting excellence and innovation in academic, economic and social aspects.

The review visits took place from October to December, 2003. They were based on the QAA’s published subject review process, adapted to meet national requirements, with elements from the QAA’s current academic review and developmental engagement processes. The HFE provided a workshop to assist participating universities in the preparation of self-evaluation documents (SED) and programme specifications. All the universities provided an SED together with, in six cases, programme specifications as a basis for the review visit to each university. Review teams, introduced by the QAA, consisting of three experienced peer reviewers of which one was a review coordinator, conducted the site visits and prepared the review reports. The seven review reports on the business administration programmes and the review team meetings undertaken in Jordan and London form the basis for this overview report.

The main features of the review method are:

Review against aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes)

The Jordanian Higher Education Accreditation Council imposes a degree of uniformity on the universities participating in the reviews of business administration programmes. However, the seven universities vary in size, subject provision, history and mission. Four of the participating universities under review are private and three are formal (public). With the arrangements for accreditation, each has a degree of autonomy to determine its specific aims and objectives at subject level.

Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes) set by the university. It measures the extent to which each subject provider is successful in achieving its aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes).

Review of student learning experience and student achievement

Subject review examines the influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of the business administration students. It covers the teaching and learning activities including some direct observation of teaching, the methods used for assessing the quality and standard of student work, examining actual student work and achievement, the curriculum, staff and staff development, student support and guidance, the application of resources (library, information technology (IT), and equipment), and the quality processes. This range of activities is captured within a core of six aspects of provision, each graded on the scale of 1 to 4.
The six aspects are:

- Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Student Progression and Achievement
- Student Support and Guidance
- Learning Resources
- Quality Management and Enhancement

**Grading the six aspects of provision (the graded profile)**

The graded profile shows:
- the extent to which the student learning experience and the academic standards achieved demonstrate that the aims set by the university for the business administration programme are being met;
- the extent to which each aspect makes a contribution to the achievement of the declared objectives (intended learning outcomes).

All six aspects in the profile have equal weighting. The creation of the graded profile is achieved by applying a grade to each aspect of provision. There are four numerical grades – 1, 2, 3 and 4, with 4 as the top grade. The assignment of the grade is a matter for the professional judgement of the review team, drawing on the evidence provided by the university.

The review teams apply the following criteria in awarding a grade:

1. The aims and/or the objectives set by the university are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified.

2. This aspect makes an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives, but significant improvement could be made. The aims set by the university are broadly met.

3. This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the university are substantially met.

4. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the university are met.
If all grades in the profile are 2 or better, then the quality and standard of the business administration programme is ‘approved’. To achieve ‘excellent’ status for being of a comparable international standard, the six profile grades added together must reach at least 21 points and there should be no grades less than 3 in the profile.

After the review reports are completed, the reviewer coordinators are asked to rank the universities in order of their achievement of their aims and objectives, with the prize awarded to the top university. The winning university has to be considered ‘excellent’, for being of a comparable international standard, to be eligible for the prize. The review coordinators attending the final grading meeting score each provision on the basis of positive points and the need for improvements, based on the individual report. The scores are then ranked and the top university identified.

**Review by peers**

All of the 11 reviewers taking part are academic and professional peers in business administration. Most are current members of staff of UK universities. Others are also specialists in business administration and are review coordinators in the UK employed by the QAA as team leaders. All reviewers are QAA trained and are widely experienced in the review processes in the UK and overseas. In addition, the HFE provides briefings for the reviewers on the project, the SEDs, the programme specifications and the logistical arrangements. On the site visits, the review teams are supported by Jordanian translators.

**Review comprising internal and external processes**

The review process has several stages:

- The preparation by the university of the SED, based on the university’s own aims and objectives for the business administration programme, and set out in the structure provided by the six aspects of provision. The university is invited to nominate a senior member of the academic staff as an institutional nominee (facilitator).

- The preparation of programme specifications for business administration which describe the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills and other attributes and the means by which these outcomes are achieved by the students.

- Two-and-a-half day review visit to each university carried out by a team of three reviewers including a review coordinator.

- Daily review meetings by each team in which all team members and the nominee participate.

- Final judgement meetings held by each team to decide on the grades to be awarded for each of the six aspects. If each aspect is graded 2 or better, the quality and standard of the business administration programme is ‘approved’.

- Production of the review report, together with a short summary report, which are then sent to the HFE.
• Production of the overview report which is sent to the HFE.

• Meeting comprising representatives of the HFE, the QAA, and the review coordinators to agree the reports and graded profiles and to make a recommendation to HFE on the award of the prize.
Subject Overview Report
Business administration

Executive Summary

Overall, the quality and academic standards of the business administration programmes reviewed in seven universities in Jordan are approved. Three of these universities are awarded at least 21 points across the six aspects and two are judged to be of an acceptable international standard. Students from these programmes successfully obtain places on masters and PhD programmes in Jordanian, European and United States universities. There is variation in quality and standards across the providers; this ranges from a provision that receives 22 points (grade average 3.7) and is highly commended to one receiving only 16 points (grade average 2.7) and containing four grade 2s. Across all participants, 45 per cent of the aspects are awarded grade 4, a high proportion, and 38 per cent are awarded grade 3. However, 7 aspects (17 per cent) are awarded only grade 2, where significant improvements are required. There is a difference in the grade averages between the public (formal) and private sectors. The grade average for the three public universities is 3.5 and for the four private universities it is 3.2, with five of the seven grade 2s awarded in the private universities. The strongest aspect is Student Support and Guidance, where all providers are awarded grade 4s, followed by Learning Resources (grade average 3.8). The weakest aspect is Quality Management and Enhancement (grade average 2.7), followed by Teaching, Learning and Assessment and Student Progression and achievement. These aspects contain two grade 2s across the seven providers.

Each university has effective strategies in place for student support and guidance and in all cases the students are well cared for. Both academic and pastoral support are provided at department level, with pastoral support and a range of services also provided at university level. The learning resources effectively support student learning. There are modern libraries with good accessibility and available computer rooms. The computer rooms are widespread and help support the introduction and development of e-learning. Accommodation is spacious with a range of teaching rooms including large lecture theatres. The curricula reflect the aims of the programmes. The curricula are structured; they have a more generic content in Years 1 and 2, but a more vocational content in Years 3 and 4, with the graduate project a feature in the final year in most cases. The quality of teaching is adequate overall. Some excellent classes were observed with staff research and consultancy supporting the teaching and learning in the best classes. Student progression rates are generally very good after Year 1 of the programmes. There is an overall awareness of the importance of quality and academic standards, with all providers seeking to introduce effective monitoring procedures and structures to ensure appropriate quality and academic standards. In the best cases, English, as well as Arabic, is widely and effectively used across the programmes.

The following recommendations are made for improvements to and continuing enhancement of quality, academic standards, and international standing for the business administration programmes:

- each provider’s aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes) included in their SED provide an essential reference point for the review and are published in the subject review report. The aims and objectives should be sufficiently clear to enable the review visit to be
planned and undertaken. In one case, only two aims and three objectives are listed in the SED. Such aims and objectives are consequently very broad and barely adequate for the continuing evaluation and improvement of the students learning experience and achievements.

- all providers are asked to produce programme specifications. Most represent a significant step in quality enhancement and an immediate benefit of the HFE’s review programme. One university chose not to produce one. This is an important document underpinning quality management and enhancement, and containing essential information for staff, students and employers. It is recommended that programme specifications are more widely used.

- academic progression should be evident in the four years (levels) of the curriculum including the final-year graduate project. On some occasions, this is not the case, with final-year students producing work of a descriptive and inappropriate quality and standard, lacking in evaluation and analysis.

- the accreditation of university programmes is perceived to be restrictive and impinging on effective curricular development. This has occurred in several instances, one in particular, where a dated and rigid curriculum is on offer. The accreditation process is valuable, but it needs to allow flexibility for curricular development. In public universities, there is seemingly less restriction evident and a more appropriate curriculum containing more student evaluation, analysis, and challenge is provided. However, the accreditation process is undergoing significant change. This report supports the continuing reform of the accreditation process and the importance for universities of exercising its scope for discretion in curricular design and implementation.

- work placement is a valuable part of the programme. However, it does not occur in all programmes, it is too short, for example, at one month, and rarely does it contribute formally to the final degree. It is recommended that it becomes a more formal feature of all four-year business programmes, is made much longer, possibly one year, and contributes to the degree award.

- the overall quality of teaching and learning is adequate. However, typically, teaching and learning methods are unduly restricted to lectures and seminars, with only limited student interaction. Universities should have appropriate written teaching and learning strategies together with staff development activities that support and monitor more innovative teaching and learning methods for the classroom. Best techniques for teaching and learning should be disseminated across the courses of the programmes, and across the universities.

- assessment, though often rigorous, is too rigid. It focuses on formal examinations that cannot assess fully the range of intended learning outcomes identified in the programme specifications. Further, university regulations permit only limited flexibility in the conduct of examinations. A wider range of assessment methods should be introduced, as being piloted at one university, to test the full range of student abilities in line with the stated learning objectives.

- feedback is provided for students, but it tends to be informal. Formal, written feedback should be systematically provided to all students on their work. The adoption of a common
frontsheet, for example, should be considered and attached to the work to ensure clarity and transparency and provide a formal record.

- programmes need to have full and current student progression data. The data might effectively track cohorts of students through each year of their four-year programmes. Recruitment numbers, transfers in and out, student achievement, and employment data should be accurately included and all data should be evaluated and analysed after each semester and each year.

- in all universities, full programme information should be provided to prospective student applicants. It could be available through web-sites, as it is in two cases. It might, with benefit, also include the programme specifications which contain information on the curriculum, teaching and learning methods, assessment, and student support and guidance.

- staff undertake research activities and consultancy, but these are insufficient for bringing staff and their students fully up-to-date and experienced in modern business practices. Staff development activities could, with benefit, include a programme of industrial secondments for staff updating on modern business practices, enhancing their teaching, and adding to curricular development.

- quality management and assurance processes are variable across the providers. The recent appointment of specialist staff in quality assurance, as in one university, is already demonstrating benefits. There need to be, as in two recently introduced cases, well-documented procedures in place at university, faculty and department levels that demonstrate the cycle of evaluation, action and improvement.

- all universities should consider introducing a formal system for ensuring academic standards are comparable internationally. In one case, a system of external examiners has been introduced and may prove an effective example. These examiners can provide an external view of quality and standards, and are also able to make comparisons with their own and other appropriate universities. They may also be used in a wider context to report on the curriculum, teaching methods, marking, and assessment. The use of ‘critical friends’ is a possible alternative.

- more use could be made of other external national and international benchmarks and sources of information. In some providers, this is partly evident, but more use could still be made of these international sources, benchmarks and comparators. These might, for example, include the QAA Code of Practice, the QAA benchmark statement for General Business and Management undergraduate honours programmes, the QAA guidelines for preparing programme specifications, the recent Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)’s Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education report, the Major Field Tests developed by the US-based Educational Testing Service, and guidelines from professional associations.

- currently, the use of and proficiency in English is highly variable and requires significant improvement overall. English is the international business language. All providers should ensure that staff and students are proficient, confident and readily understood in using English, both orally and in written form, as well as Arabic. The business programmes could effectively be taught in English as well as Arabic, with students producing specified work
and projects in English, as in the best cases. This would assist universities in gaining both an international standard and an international standing for their business programmes and attract more international students. It would also assist graduates in obtaining employment.
Introduction

1. This overview report has been derived from the subject review reports for business administration (recently titled business management at Jordan University) of the seven review visits carried out in 2003 (Annex A). Its main purposes are to highlight positive features, to emphasise potential areas for improvement, and to assist in the dissemination of best practice.

2. The review of the quality and standards of business administration programmes was carried out by teams of subject specialist reviewers, each led by a review coordinator (Annex B). In all cases, the teams reached consensual judgements in the light of each university’s aims and the objectives (intended learning outcomes) set for students.

3. Business administration programmes are of direct economic importance for Jordanian society. Large, multinational businesses are able to recruit the best graduates irrespective of their country of origin. Jordan’s universities, therefore, need to offer a business education which compares favourably with best international practice and provides graduates who can compete successfully in the business world. Such high quality programmes may also attract more good students from within Jordan and from foreign countries, again assisting the Jordanian economy.

4. The programmes reviewed are originally based on the United States model, which aims to achieve significant breadth and also, to some extent, depth in business administration. The breadth, in part, is achieved by a number of courses (modules) that are national requirements such as Arabic, English and transferable skills. Breadth is also achieved by requiring students to study a number of electives which are broadly related to business administration. Depth is achieved in the remaining core courses, usually 50 to 60 per cent of the total, which are business specific and contain some pre-requisites.

5. Of the seven universities visited, the oldest and largest (28,000 students), the University of Jordan, has existed for over 40 years. Of the other universities, some, including the four private universities, have been established about 10 years. The number of total enrolments for the programmes across the participants ranges from 150 to more than 800 students, the largest numbers being in the public universities. The average total enrolments in the public universities is 570 students, whereas that for the private universities is 250 students.

Aims and Objectives (Intended Learning Outcomes)

6. Typically, the aims are appropriately expressed in a general way that could be applied to all years of the programmes. For example, some relate to problem solving, others to inculcating a spirit of research, and others to the acquisition of skills. Several include reference to the successful operation of business such as attaining communication skills. In order to form judgements, the reviewers require the aims and objectives (intended learning outcomes) to be clear and with almost all providers, this is the case. In one instance, however, only two aims and three objectives are listed in the SED and this is minimal and barely adequate.
7. The learning objectives (intended learning outcomes) are listed in the SED in all seven cases. The University of Jordan is a good example. In addition, they are also detailed in the programme specifications under knowledge and understanding and under skills acquisition. They enable the reviewers to make judgements as to whether the students are completing the programmes and to whether the aims of the programmes are attainable and being achieved.

8. Six universities produced programme specifications with programme aims, programme learning outcomes, and programme structures. The other university produced additional material that could readily be transformed into programme specifications. Programme specifications enable universities to inform students, prospective students, staff, and employers about the business administration programmes. They also assist with assuring appropriate academic standards are provided. To be effective, they need to be updated every year. Consequently, they are a very useful document and can be used as more than a provider of basic information. The Jordanian universities should, therefore, consider making more use of programme specifications and posting them on the university web-sites. They would help Jordan achieve its goals in business administration education and, subsequently, its economy. In order to be readily understood, they need to be written and presented in a user-friendly form.

9. The reviewers encourage all providers of business administration programmes to produce an appropriate range of aims and objectives and for all to produce programme specifications with intended learning outcomes.

**Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation**

10. This aspect made a full contribution to the attainment of the aims in three universities, where grade 4 is awarded. There is less consistency and scope for improvement in the other four universities where the grades awarded vary from 2 to 3. Three of the four are private universities. In all seven cases, the curriculum is designed for four years of study, though this may be extended to six years. In rare instances, such as at Yarmouk University, students can complete their programme in three to four years by attending summer schools. The number of credit hours is between 125 and 135 for the programmes. At the University of Jordan, for example, 126 credit hours are required to complete the programme, and these are obtained from 42 three-credit hours courses (modules).

11. Programmes tend to be based on the United States model. The reviewers found in several universities that the curriculum contained breadth, but lacked appropriate depth, including the final-year graduate project. This is particularly evident in those graded less than 4. Thus, in these cases there is limited academic progression with only a few pre-requisites demanded. Often, there is a lack of specialist pathways for students to select. The reviewers suggest that standards could be improved in these cases by increasing the depth in the curriculum, particularly in Years 3 and 4, having a stronger system of pre-requisites, and introducing specialist pathways such as in marketing or human resource management.

12. Programmes can comprise up to 50 per cent non-departmental courses. These are university-wide and faculty courses. The reviewers recognise this generic aim to provide a broad and rounded education. These courses can relate to national requirements, for example, the inclusion of English 1 and English 2. Computer skills are a recently added requirement.
In some universities, these courses are included entirely in Years 1 and 2 of the four-year programme. However, with English it can result in its lack of use and proficiency in the later two years of the programme and this can disadvantage the students in their studies and job applications for international work.

13. As part of the curriculum, the students may undertake work placement in most programmes. This is a valuable part of the programme, particularly for the day students as it provides experience of the business world and problem-solving applications. It is normally an optional feature and does not attract credit hours. It tends to be for one month only. In the best instances, the business staff provide a list of placement contacts to help their students secure an appropriate placement. In similar four-year European programmes, work placement is normally for one year. The students and employers stated to the reviewers that they wished that the placement become a more formal part of the curriculum and for a longer period. The reviewers suggest that these requests are fully considered by the departments and more formally built-in to business administration programmes.

14. The Accreditation Committee of the Higher Education Council accredits the programmes at public and private universities. Overall, the curricula at the three public universities show some academic progression, and appear more flexible with courses in the first two years providing an appropriate foundation and courses in the later years developing conceptual, analytical problem-solving and transferable skills. For example, at Yarmouk University there is evidence of this in the Small Business Management, International Business Management, and in the final-year Symposium (project). Curricular currency is maintained by regular review and, for example, this is to lead to a new course in Contemporary Management Issues. At Hashemite University, for example, the intended learning outcomes and the resultant skills developed in model building, problem solving, and in evaluation and analysis are at a significantly higher level in Years 3 and 4, also indicating academic progression.

15. There is a greater contrast in the curricula and the impact of the accreditation procedures between the private universities. At Philadelphia, recent innovations include a new core course in Business Ethics, and new elective courses in Risk Management, Crisis Management, and Special Topics. The introduction of the excellent Business Incubator Centre encourages the students to study how to set up their own businesses. Whereas, in another private university, compliance with the accreditation process appears to have constrained curriculum design. The structure is dated and heavily technical in nature with limited opportunity for the students to study problem-based courses or the emerging areas of managing change, organisational development, and entrepreneurship. Even though there is a relatively smaller intake of students, there is little flexibility, one pathway through the programme, no specialist routes and few electives.

16. In the best cases, the research activity and consultancy of the staff support the curriculum in maintaining currency and relevance. Research skills and study skills form part of the programme. The lecturers are proficient in English. The latest texts, often in English, are the recommended reading to support the curriculum. However, in most instances, greater and more formal input from external sources would benefit curriculum design. Such sources, for example, might include further reference to the QAA benchmark statement, the establishment of an employer’s forum, and the introduction and wide use of external examiners or ‘critical friends’ to confirm academic standards are comparable with similar programmes world-wide.
17. The employers supported the programmes’ curricula and found them relevant in all universities. Feedback from current and past students indicated a high level of satisfaction with the breadth of their programmes and they confidently stated that they prepared them for employment.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

18. This is a weak aspect overall. Only in one university are the aims of the programme met fully and grade 4 is awarded. In four universities, the aims are substantially met and a grade 3 is awarded. There is significant scope for improvement in two universities awarded grade 2. Across the providers the level of teaching and learning tends to be adequate, with weaknesses largely focusing on the narrow range of student assessment methods used and the quality of feedback to students. There is little difference in this aspect between public and private universities, apart from a generally wider use of English in the public universities and smaller class sizes, between 10 and 40 students, in the private universities.

19. In the best instances, the approach to teaching, learning and assessment is informed and influenced by university policies. These approaches are discussed at university, faculty and departmental levels and result in explicit strategies for achieving programme aims and enabling the students to attain the learning outcomes outlined in the programme specifications. This teaching embeds a firm foundation of knowledge and understanding and enables the students to achieve appropriate academic, practical and transferable skills. The effectiveness could be improved in most universities if there were explicit written teaching, learning and assessment guidelines for staff.

20. The reviewers observed some high quality teaching and learning in the best instances, with examples of innovative approaches and classes that drew upon the research and consultancy of staff. The needs of the students were addressed effectively by using, for example, textbook materials set within a local or regional context that emphasised the relevance of the ideas to Jordanian business. There was a clear structure to the classes, explicit intended learning outcomes and enthusiastic delivery. Role-play, group work, student presentations, and references to placement and employment were observed. Another observed strength was the peer tutoring of numerical courses at Al-Zaytoonah University. There is continuous encouragement for students to use modern and extensive libraries and on-line materials to support their classroom learning. This is also evident at the University of Jordan. At Hashemite University, ‘Blackboard’ is installed as a virtual learning environment. The workload overall is demanding and provides appropriate challenge to the students.

21. There is limited exposure to the use of English on some programmes, particularly in private universities. In some cases, just a few courses are taught in English. In other cases, none of the university or faculty courses is taught in English, which is the chosen language only in some of the 50 per cent that are departmental courses. It is clear that across the providers the English proficiency and the confidence in using English by both staff and students is very variable. It tends to be stronger in the public universities, typically so at the University of Jordan. Often, the students stated to the reviewers that they wished to use English more in their programmes, recognising that it is the international business language. The reviewers endorse this and urge that in all business administration programmes English is commonly adopted and used by both staff and students, as well as Arabic, and that this is monitored by the universities.
22. Assessment methods used across the providers are largely limited. In most programmes, as outlined in the programme specifications, examinations account for 90 per cent of assessments in the courses, with only 10 per cent for course work. Lecturers are able in one public university to reduce this to 70 per cent, with permission from the Head of Department, to reflect the nature and level of the course. The reviewers recommend that there should be a more appropriate match of assessments to intended learning outcomes, particularly when assessing skills and independent learning projects. Assessment criteria and feedback to students should be formally written, rather than the oral exchange often currently used, enabling the students to build a personal record of their achievement of the learning outcomes and their progression through their programme. It could form a fuller basis for a student record of achievement, providing a complete record of student performance over the four years of their studies.

23. An example of good practice is being piloted at Philadelphia University, where the use of a wider range of assessment methods is being trialled. These include the assessment of case-studies, group work, graduate projects, and written course work. This allows for a more appropriate alignment with each course’s intended learning outcomes and also the aims of the programme. It also enables the students to demonstrate a wider range of abilities, particularly the skills used in student presentations.

**Student Progression and Achievement**

24. The gradings for this aspect range from 4 to 2, with two universities receiving grade 4, three receiving grade 3, and two universities are graded 2. This is a relatively weak aspect overall. Most self-evaluation documents contain aims that reflect a broad, general education in business administration and these are at least broadly met for this aspect, even in the weakest universities, though in these significant improvements are required.

25. Students are recruited through a dual system based on their results in the high school’s Tawjihi or the GCE A-Level grades from private schools. At public universities, some 55 per cent enter through the national system and 45 per cent are recruited directly or internationally. Often, international student recruitment can be 10 per cent and, exceptionally, at the Applied Science University, it amounts to two-thirds and successfully reflects the University’s mission to be a Pan-Arab University. This international intake adds to the richness of the overall learning experience. In some universities, 5 per cent of the intake are recruited from community colleges and granted admission exemptions. There is a broad gender balance of students across the business administration providers apart from the Applied Science University, where males account for 70 per cent of the students on the programme.

26. Entry levels vary between public and private universities. At the University of Jordan, the grade point average (GPA) is 89 per cent and the minimum entry is 65 per cent. At Yarmouk University it is above 85 per cent with the minimum also 65 per cent. In contrast, at private universities, the minimum entry is 55 per cent with a typical average GPA being some 65 per cent.

27. Student progression is a problem in Year 1 at several universities. There can be some 15 per cent withdrawals or transfers out of the programme. This may reflect the dual admissions
system where some less academically experienced students are admitted directly and find the programme difficult. Some students admitted under the national system stated that they were entered for programmes at universities they had not selected. This may also be a reason for some poor retention rates in Year 1. After the first year, retention rates greatly improve, for example, they are 96 per cent at Al-Zaytoonah University. The reviewers recommend that the universities keep detailed progression data, and take effective action to evaluate and redress withdrawals. This should also apply where enrolments are falling, as at Yarmouk University.

28. The programmes are planned for four years duration. At the University of Jordan, more than 80 per cent complete in four years, whereas at Yarmouk, it is just over 50 per cent. At Philadelphia University, it is some 64 per cent, with 26 per cent taking longer, and 10 per cent withdrawing. It is the evening students, though often sponsored by employers, who take longer at Al-Zaytoonah University and this may be a common feature across the providers. The reviewers recommend that across all business administration programmes in Jordan the reasons for a longer period of study and those courses with a higher failure rate are examined and, if possible, corrective action taken.

29. The quality and standard of work produced at the public universities is often higher than at the private universities. For example, the final-year graduate projects are more likely to be research-based and contain evaluation and analysis. The best are of a very high and publishable quality. Here, the work is more likely to be produced in English and, where not, an English summary may be produced. There is less focus on technical skills and more on problem-solving and analytical abilities, thereby reflecting the aims of the programmes. With the intake requirements of private universities being lower and allowing the entry of some less academically experienced students, those completing their programmes successfully reflect considerable added-value in many cases. Here, there is a greater emphasis on technical skills rather than their application to problems, evaluation and analysis, an exception being the Investment Management course at Philadelphia University. Typically, as at Zarqa University, the recent degree classifications are 2 per cent ‘excellent’, 8 per cent ‘very good’, 46 per cent ‘good’, and 44 per cent ‘satisfactory’. Employers and past students complimented the student achievements at all seven universities. As mentioned previously, it could be of benefit for all departments to employ some form of system of external examining to report formally on the quality and academic standard of final-year work and degree awards.

30. Overall, there is a lack of data on student destinations. Often the data provided is vague. One university ‘suggested’ that 80 per cent of graduates obtained employment within one year. Another university sent questionnaires to the graduates over several years and of the respondents (67 per cent), 82 per cent had obtained employment and 75 per cent obtained employment within one year of graduation. The reviewers acknowledge that it is not easy to track student destinations, particularly if this is delayed for some time after the students have graduated, but they recommend that a systematic and immediate approach is adopted. There might be merit in considering such a development as a national project applying to all universities in Jordan.

Student Support and Guidance

31. In all seven universities, a grade 4 is awarded this aspect. This is the strongest aspect with all providers meeting their aims. There is a caring learning environment for the business
administration students in all cases. At one university, Zarqa, an Islamic ethos has proved particularly attractive to students from a wide area.

32. All universities have strategies for support and guidance. Some are implemented at departmental level and others are university-wide. In the best cases, the policies and the information are clearly documented. Philadelphia University provides an excellent brochure on its library that is clear and student-friendly and this is an example of good practice, outlining all services that are available to the students. Al-Zaytoonah University provides a general guide in both Arabic and English. Such documents can be costly to produce, but the reviewers report positively on their effectiveness. Admission processes and induction feature in all cases. Accurate and current information needs to be provided to prospective students and recent entrants. This can be supplied electronically as well as in handbooks. Hashemite and Jordan Universities have developed web-sites to help convey this information. Programme specifications, if user-friendly, are also an excellent source of initial information.

33. At departmental level, there are sound systems in place for academic and pastoral support. Often, an adviser is appointed to each student who undertakes both roles, monitoring student performance and providing pastoral advice where needed. Staff are available during ‘office hours’ when students can meet with them; at Al-Zaytoonah University, these amount to seven hours per week for each staff member and there is additional support for the graduate project. In all cases, there appears good communication and working relationships between staff and students. At Yarmouk University, in another example of good practice, the MBA students provide tutorial support in numerical courses, which is much appreciated by the undergraduates. At one university, an adviser is provided only if the student attains 60 per cent GPA on the courses. This appears to provide an incentive to staff and students. Students, in some instances, find it difficult to obtain work placements. In these cases, students stated that they require more help and advice. The reviewers recommend that a more structured approach be taken with work placements overall.

35. There are university-wide central services in all of the participating universities. These provide support for those students who may have physical disabilities or special learning needs. Counselling is offered where requested by students. In one university, psychological support is provided. International students are cared for specifically to help them adjust to their new learning environment. There are medical centres available in the universities. Postgraduate study advice is given on programmes available and entry requirements. Across the seven universities, careers support is more variable. In some cases, it is informal, with advice and employer introductions provided by the academic advisers themselves. In other instances, it is more structured with a university careers adviser giving guidance on interview techniques, on producing CVs, and arranging visits from employers.

**Learning Resources**

36. Six universities are awarded grade 4 for this aspect and the remaining university a grade 3. This is the second strongest aspect across the providers with learning resources at least substantially meeting the aims and effectively supporting the students in achieving the intended learning outcomes of their courses. There is, overall, a good learning environment in every case. This should give potential students confidence in their choice of university in which to study business administration.
37. In all cases, there is a university-wide infrastructure for the provision of modern resources. There is planned investment and, in some cases, for example at Philadelphia University, there is an annual resource review. This enables the business administration students to be well supported in their learning by modern libraries, computing laboratories and equipment, accommodation on attractive campuses, well-qualified staff, and, as with the University of Jordan and the Applied Science University, some excellent sporting and social facilities.

38. The libraries are generally modern. They provide induction programmes and continuous support. There is staff liaison between the libraries and the departments. The opening hours are variable, with the best open 0800 to 2100 hours for five days plus Saturday mornings, thereby providing adequate access for both day and evening students. In all cases, the book and journal stock supports the business administration programmes though, in one university, there need to be more English texts to support the use of English. The bookstocks also support the graduate projects. There are overnight book reserves for the key texts. There are adequate reading places. Integrated computers are readily available, though in one library students waited for a place. At their best, the library is widely used. For example, at the University of Jordan, 5,000-6,000 students are daily users, including the business administration students, contributing to an industrious and vibrant learning environment. However, the reviewers saw only limited use of the library at several universities during their review visits. In these cases, there is only limited referencing in student written work. It may be helpful, where limited use is made of the libraries by the students, for the university to undertake an evaluation of the reasons and prepare an improvement plan.

39. There are generally adequate supplies of computers in all cases; however, there is heavy cyclical demand when students undertake course work and graduate projects. At Al-Zaytoonah University, for example, there are eight faculty rooms each with 21 computers and a printer. Two of these rooms are open access from 0800 to 2100 hours, with technical support. There is a three-year replacement programme. Software is in Arabic and English. At Hashemite University, the Students’ Union has computers available to access. There is an overall ratio of one computer to 10 business students at Hashemite. There is internet access and, at Philadelphia University, a distance-learning facility. However, there is a need for more web-based inter-active learning materials across the providers generally.

40. Accommodation is spacious and located on attractive campuses. At Al-Zaytoonah University, the lecture rooms have 40 to 80 places, plus a large lecture theatre. However, external noise can be sometimes intrusive on the lectures. At Zarqa University, rooms have spaces for left-handed students. The provision of teaching aids in the classrooms is variable and occasionally barely adequate. Whiteboards and blackboards are normally available. Overhead projectors are available in some cases, as is power point and, in one case as a good example, the use of ‘Blackboard’. Some rooms would benefit from new paintwork. At two universities, some desks are fixed. This is a deterrent to any small group teaching where students may wish to sit in a different configuration for ease of communication and motivation.

41. Overall, the teaching staff are well qualified academically. Some are on short-term contracts, but permanent staff have tenure. The results of student questionnaires relate directly to staff advancement, as do the amount of research published and level of community service undertaken. There are mentoring schemes for new staff and scholarship schemes for
those wishing to obtain a PhD qualification. With public universities, staff study for their PhD in the United States or the UK. In private universities, most PhDs are obtained from Jordanian universities, other Arab states’ universities such as Iraq, and occasionally from European and United States’ universities. Staff are research active and at Zarqa University 5 per cent of the University’s budget is set aside for staff research for which they must bid, with two business administration lecturers currently successful. Across the providers, the staff-student ratio is about 1:15 for business courses, and much greater for university courses. These tend to be lower in private universities with relatively smaller intakes and here small group teaching is more common. Overall, there are few female staff, yet there are many female students, sometimes over 50 per cent of the intake. This can create tutorial overload on those few female staff. Staff, although sometimes engaged in consultancy work, would benefit from planned secondments to industry to update themselves on current business practice. The English proficiency of staff is variable across the providers, with many in the public universities seemingly more confident. This needs monitoring in all universities and staff development provided in English proficiency.

Quality Management and Enhancement

42. This is the weakest aspect across the providers. Two universities are awarded grade 2, where significant improvement is required, and none are awarded grade 4. The characteristics are common to both public and private university sectors, though the two weakest performances are found in private universities.

43. In one of the best cases, Philadelphia, the university, faculty and department demonstrate a strong belief in the importance of quality management and enhancement. Specialist quality assurance staff have been appointed. The teaching staff fully understand and participate in the quality assurance process. There is a structure in place with interconnecting committees for course review, programme review, student feedback, assessment process, and peer review of staff performance. External associations, including an external examiner, are linked to continuous improvement in quality and standards. Additionally, the faculty monitors the quality of staff and student recruitment, the quality of teaching and research, and the sufficiency of resources to finance improvements and enhancement. The assessment process is scrutinised by the department’s Quality Management Agenda and the Monitoring Agenda. These characteristics of good practice deserve to be employed more widely.

44. At several universities, there are quality management and enhancement processes at an early stage and further development is required. Many committees, including staff-student committees hold meetings, but minutes are not always kept and students are not always informed of action taken and any resultant outcomes. Other committees work on only a day-to-day basis without medium or long-term planning for improving the business administration programme. Accreditation takes place, but it would be helpful if the universities received a full report on the standards and quality of the programme so that they can build on strengths and take action where weaknesses are identified. Student questionnaires are regularly used at the end of each semester, but it is not always clear as to the outcomes from the student comments on their courses. Staff development often includes a mentoring system for new staff, peer review and appraisal of staff, and the support for staff to obtain PhDs and undertake research. These activities could, with benefit, be extended more fully in some universities to include teaching, learning and assessment methods in order to
enhance the quality of learning across the programmes by all lecturers, teaching assistants, and instructors.

45. Limited use is made of external sources in the majority of the universities. For example, all universities have employer links; these could, with benefit, be expanded and formalised so that regular meetings take place and minutes recorded. The employers could then comment formally on the currency of the curriculum, the standard of work, and the quality of the graduates produced. In most instances, external guidance and referencing are not used, though some informal contact may be made with other universities. It would be of benefit if all universities considered the appointment of external examiners, ‘critical friends’, or other external sources to evaluate and advise on the business administration programme. These could be used to support the process of maintaining appropriate benchmarks for quality and standards.

46. The production of the SEDs and, in most cases, programme specifications is very encouraging. The participating universities clearly invested much effort in preparing these important documents. They all provided a suitable basis for the reviews to be undertaken. They are, however, variable in their effectiveness. In the best instances, they are well structured, evaluative and analytical. Strengths and weaknesses are identified, together with action plans and outcomes to rectify the weaknesses and enhancement plans to build on the strengths. Cross-referencing is used and appropriate annexes appended. In contrast, other SEDs are almost entirely descriptive. It would have been beneficial if the sections on Quality Management and Enhancement not only described the quality processes but also included a diagram explaining these processes. Any annexes might include accurate and detailed information on student progression, including transfers in and out. The programme specifications produced by six universities are clear. More, however, might be made of them to provide essential information to staff, students, prospective students and employers. For example, they might be listed on the university’s web-site to provide readily accessible information. They could also serve as a template for periodic internal reports on the effectiveness of the degree programmes.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Improvements

47. Overall, the quality of the business administration programmes, as measured against the participants’ aims and learning objectives (intended learning outcomes), is at least satisfactory and in many cases good or very good. The provision in business administration is approved in all seven universities; however, there is variation in quality and standards across these universities. This ranges from a provision that is awarded 22 points (grade average 3.7), and is highly commended, to one receiving only 16 points (grade average 2.7) and containing four grade 2s. Across all participants, 45 per cent of the six aspects are awarded grade 4, a high proportion, and 38 per cent are awarded grade 3. Seventeen per cent of aspects are awarded grade 2, indicating some significant weaknesses. There is a difference in the grade averages for the public and private sectors. The grade average in the public universities is 3.5 and in the private universities it is 3.2, with five of the seven grade 2s awarded in the private universities.

48. The strongest aspects common featuring in virtually all participating universities are Student Support and Guidance and Learning Resources. Each university has effective strategies for support and guidance and in all programmes the students are well cared for.
Both academic and pastoral support are features at departmental level, with the latter also provided at university level. These work in harmony. The learning resources support the business administration students. There are modern, adequately stocked libraries, with good accessibility and available computer rooms. The computing resources are widespread and help support the introduction and development of e-learning. The accommodation is spacious with a range of teaching rooms including large lecture theatres. The Business Incubator Centre at Philadelphia University and the use of ‘Blackboard’ virtual learning environment at Hashemite University are examples of innovative and good practice. The aims set for the business administration programmes are appropriately generic overall and express broad educational purposes for the provision; the learning objectives (intended learning outcomes) are more clearly business-specific. There is a clear relationship between the stated aims and the objectives (intended learning outcomes) in all cases. However, listing only two aims and three objectives in one SED is at best minimal and barely adequate for a significant four-year programme of study.

49. The Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation reflect the aims in most cases. The curricula are more generic in Years 1 and 2, but are vocational in Years 3 and 4, with the graduate project a feature of the final year in most programmes. There tends to be more flexibility in the public universities and a greater recognition of the higher skills of problem solving, evaluation and analysis, with evidence of academic progression through the programme. The programmes offered by the private universities are similarly accredited, but this is perceived by some universities to constrain curriculum development, resulting in rigid and more dated curricula offered. To maintain the relevance and currency of the curricula in a rapidly changing discipline such as business administration, it is important for universities to encourage departments to exercise their true scope for discretion in curricular design and implementation within their terms of reference and regulations. Two participating private universities, Philadelphia and Applied Science Universities, have been creative and innovative in offering more appropriate curricula for the business world.

50. The quality of the teaching is adequate overall. Some excellent classes were observed, with students involved and motivated. Staff research and consultancy support the teaching and learning in the best cases. However, assessment methods are often less appropriate, with a rigid focus virtually entirely on examinations. One university, Philadelphia, is piloting a wider range of assessment methods allowing students to be tested more effectively on their abilities.

51. Student Progression and Achievement is a weak aspect overall. There are often retention problems in Year 1, though thereafter progression rates are good. The programmes are planned for four years of study, but a significant proportion of students take longer. The standard of work produced varies across the providers. On some occasions, even in the final year, work can be descriptive rather than analytical. Academic progression is seemingly minimal across the four years in several programmes. However, in the best cases, excellent graduate projects of publishable quality are produced and in English. The proficiency in English is variable across the providers. At best, such as at the University of Jordan, it is very good and totally effective. Too often, however, the students, including final-year students, find it difficult to write coherently and to hold a business discussion in English. In some cases, the staff are not confident in their use of English and revert to Arabic. This is not satisfactory for students embarking on an international business career.
52. Quality Management and Enhancement is the weakest aspect, with quality processes and procedures variable in their effectiveness. There is, however, an overall awareness of their importance and often quality management units have been recently established at the universities. In the best cases, there is a system at university, faculty, and departmental levels which are interconnected. Specialist quality assurance staff are appointed to offer advice, to monitor the processes, to produce minutes of meetings, write reports, and provide staff development. In the less successful cases, the procedures need to be formalised as too much is vague and unchecked. Greater use should be made of external reference points and, for example, consideration might be given to appointing external examiners or ‘critical friends’ for the programmes. Links with employers and alumni also need to be formalised with committees established and regular meetings held.

53. Other recommendations of the business administration provision include:

a. The work placements over a one-month period are too short to be fully effective. It would be an improvement if a longer period was adopted and if these were formalised as part of the curriculum, being made mandatory and have credit hours attached. On similar four-year vocational programmes in the UK and Europe, there is a one-year work placement designed as an integral part of the curriculum.

b. Some excellent teaching was observed with fully motivated and involved students. However, other teaching was restricted to formal lectures and seminars, often with little interaction with the students. It would be helpful in such cases for the university to produce a written teaching and learning strategy, employing a more appropriate, wider range, and this should be accompanied by more relevant staff development to include teaching and learning methods.

c. A wider adoption of a range of assessment methods should be considered. Currently, the focus on assessment by formal examinations is restrictive and does not test fully student abilities. The systems used in European countries, and being tested at Philadelphia University, include a greater assessment weighting for student work including dissertations and projects, group work, presentations, and work placements. Additionally, the work is normally marked promptly and the students are informed, but too often this feedback is informal only. The reviewers recommend that formal, written feedback is provided and possibly, for example, the adoption of a standard frontsheet be considered and attached to all student work.

d. There is a clear need to produce current student progression data, enabling staff to track progression and take action where needed. The data should track, if possible, cohorts of students through each year of their four-year programme. Transfers in and transfers out should be included. Universities also need to formalise their tracking of students on completing their programmes. It is best undertaken immediately the students graduate and to follow up persistently when information is not immediately forthcoming from the students. Questionnaires are the normal method for collecting this data, but alumni associations can also prove helpful in tracking student work destinations. In addition, the participating universities need to establish routine methods of analysing the resultant information and to ensure that appropriate actions are taken and monitored.
e. Student guidance should extend to the period before enrolment. It is important that future applicants have a wide range of current information about the programme and its organisation. In several cases, this is being provided by universities through their web-site. However, all universities should consider developing a web-site and load it with the relevant information. Listing the programme specifications on the web-site would provide prospective students with important and relevant information about the programme, including the curriculum and assessment methods, to assist them in making their study choices.

f. Overall, the staff are well qualified to undertake their teaching. There are opportunities available for further research and, where warranted, study for PhDs. They have informal contacts with industry and undertake consultancy work. However, it would be beneficial for their teaching if regular and planned secondments to industry were available as part of staff development. This would help ensure that staff had current experience of modern business practices which could be used to inform their teaching and update and enhance the curriculum.

g. More use should be made of external sources to improve confidence in the relevance of the programmes and sustain continuing improvements. These sources include the employing community and other external reference points. All of the universities might ensure, if not currently operating, that an effective external referencing system is introduced, one which not only provides reports on academic standards, but also on the curriculum, student assessment and marking schemes. These would assist with gaining both an international standards and international standing for the business administration programmes, and for the respective universities. For example, more use might be made of the QAA benchmark statement for General Business and Management. Here, there is guidance on knowledge and understanding, skills required, teaching and learning, and standards of achievement. This document usefully provides an international benchmark for all undergraduate business honours programmes. Other external sources could include the Major Field Test developed by the US-based Educational Testing Service or the guidelines produced by professional associations.

h. The recent HEFCE publication, Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education report, is also a useful source for universities in developing student data sets. This contains guidance on providing information for students and the public which should be available in universities. It includes details on recording student progression, on recording feedback from students, on assessment procedures, and on programme specifications. There is potential for a national project to identify the key indicators of performance, drawing upon best international practice, and it could inform the quality assurance processes in all universities.

i. All of the seven universities within this project aim to provide an international standard of business education, to recruit high quality students, attract students from overseas, and to produce graduates of international standing. Reiterating one of the recommendations above, these universities should ensure that the business programmes continue to use English, as well as Arabic, through all years, that students and staff are supported in this, and that all are proficient, confident and readily understood when using English, both orally and in written form.
Annex A
Universities participating in this review

Al-Zaytoonah University
Applied Science University
Hashemite University
Philadelphia University
University of Jordan
Yarmouk University
Zarqa University

Annex B
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