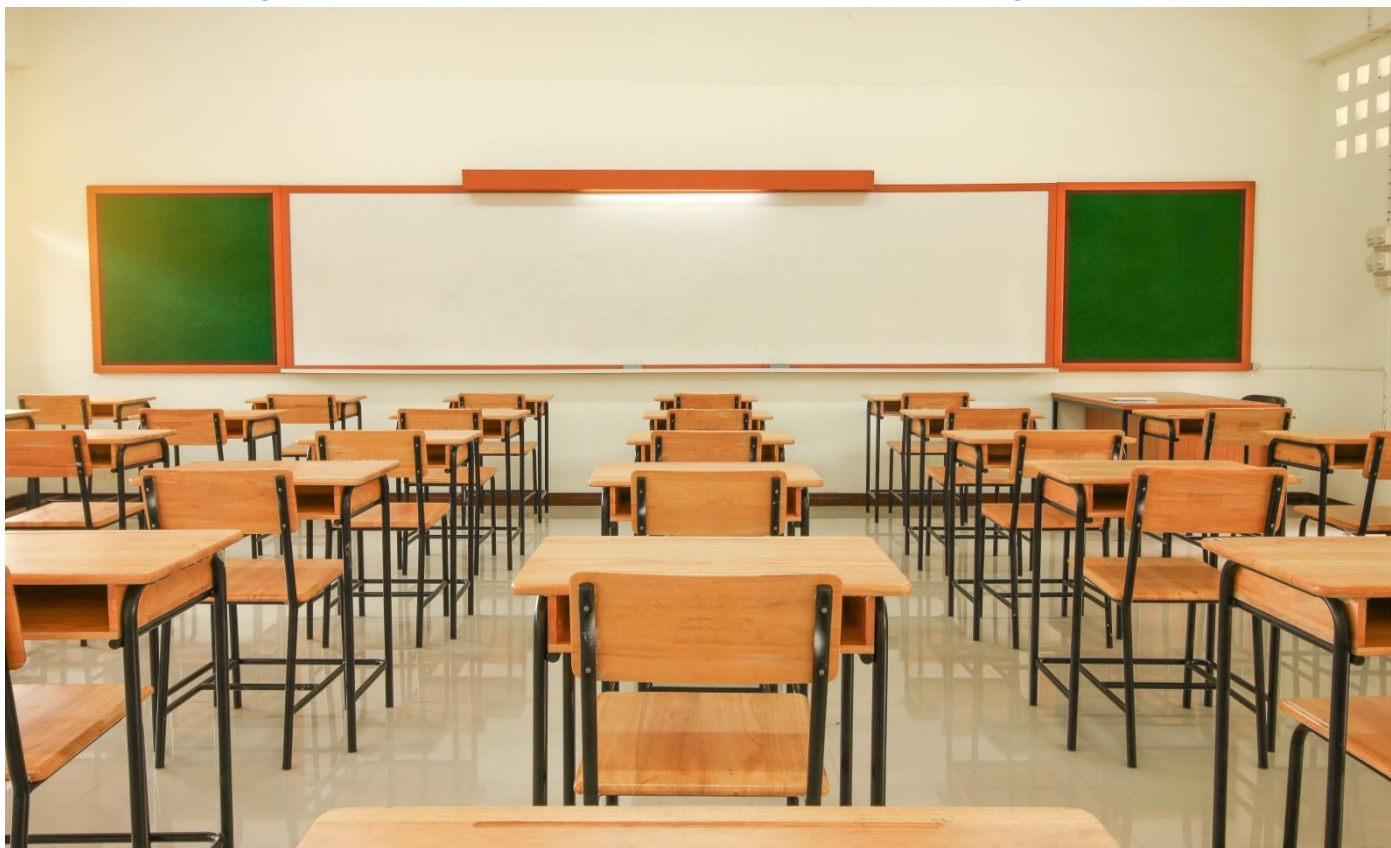


Benchmarking the BIBF International Foundation Programme



UK NARIC has found the International Foundation Programme (IFP), awarded by the BIBF comparable to RQF Level 3, overall GCE A Level standard.

Context and scope

The Bahrain Institute of Business and Finance (BIBF) is an education provider in Bahrain offering over 400 programmes for the financial and business sector.¹ BIBF's International Foundation Programme (IFP) is one such programme and is intended for individuals seeking progression to degree-level study with the BIBF or internationally (at institutional discretion) and aims to equip students with an introductory knowledge of business, finance, economics and accounting. In July 2020, UK NARIC completed an independent and objective evaluation of the IFP (September 2020 specification) in the context of the UK education system, to determine its comparable academic

standing using the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) as the main reference point, and drawing on similarly-focused GCE A Levels and other qualifications, where appropriate.

Overview of the IFP

Entry requirements

Entry onto the IFP is typically based on successful completion of the high school diploma 'Shahadat Al-Thanawaya Alaama' (or comparable qualification) with a minimum GPA of 75%, alongside evidence of English Language proficiency (minimum IELTS score of 6.0, or for conditional entry 5.0-5.5²).

¹ Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance, (n.d). *About Us*. [online].

² Applicants accepted onto the IFP on a conditional basis with an IELTS score of 5.0 or 5.5 must attend BIBF IELTS preparatory courses during Semester 1 and / or Semester 2.

Duration, structure and content

The IFP is a one-year full-time programme comprising eight 15-credit modules (all compulsory):

- Academic Study Skills
- Academic Writing and Presentation Skills
- Business English
- Emerging Business Trends*
- Introduction to Economics
- Introduction to Mathematics for Business and Finance
- Introduction to Statistics
- Principles of Accounting and Finance*.

** New modules starting September 2020.*

Assessment and grading

The BIBF conducts three to four summative assessment methods for each IFP module, including final written examinations and reports, mid-term tests, group projects, debates and presentations. Each IFP module and the final IFP award classification overall is graded on a scale of Distinction (90% and above), Merit (80%-89%), Credit (70-79%), Pass (50%-69%) and Fail (49% or below).

Key findings

UK NARIC's independent benchmarking review and comparative analysis of the IFP in the context of the UK education system finds the IFP comparable to RQF Level 3 standard in regard to the knowledge and skills it develops and assesses overall.

Analysis of the IFP indicated that the programme develops factual, procedural and theoretical knowledge and understanding of a subject, as expected at RQF Level 3 standard. Furthermore, both the IFP and similarly-focused GCE A Levels use final written examinations at the end of the course. Both also employ similar case-study and broader essay-style assessment questions that assess the ability to define, interpret and evaluate information, however, it should be noted that the IFP also includes a range of other summative assessment methods for each module.

The introductory-level knowledge and skills expected in certain topic areas on completion of the IFP, such as business environments and emerging business trends, types of business

organisations, marketing, leadership and decision making are also expected outcomes of GCE A Levels in similarly-focused subjects; however, differences in the content and structure of the curriculum are present which reflect the diploma-style award of the IFP in comparison to the typically single-subject GCE A Level qualifications.

Similarities were also identified between the IFP and a similarly-focused RQF Level 3 qualification analysed in this study in regard to the development of independent study skills and academic writing in preparation for progression to undergraduate study (e.g. data collection, research, presentation, critical reflection and academic essay writing). Consequently, the IFP's aim of preparing students for progression to undergraduate study is consistent with similarly-focused RQF Level 3 qualifications and GCE A Levels, typically facilitating entry onto general undergraduate level courses in the UK.

The IFP is accepted onto undergraduate study in the UK, at institutional discretion. Specifically, IFP graduates are eligible to apply for undergraduate study at the BIBF including the BIBF-delivered University of London BSc in Economics and Management, and Year 1 of the BIBF's Diploma in Accounting, Banking and Finance or Islamic Finance, which after Year 2 can lead on to the third and final year of a BA/BSc Honours degree from Bangor University.

Methodology

Based on UK NARIC's well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation and benchmarking study comprised a detailed review of the IFP in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Associated outcomes.

Quality assurance and control mechanisms and processes were also considered for the purposes of UK NARIC determining comparability.