



هيئة ضمان جودة التعليم و التدريب
Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Modern Institute of Science and Computer
Isa Town
Kingdom of Bahrain

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The Vocational Review Unit

The Vocational Review Unit (VRU) is part of the Quality Assurance Authority for Education and Training (QAAET), an independent body set up under Royal Decree No.32 of 2008 amended by Royal Decree No. 6 of 2009. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the VRU is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the quality of vocational provision, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, establishing success measures, spreading best practice and offering policy advice to key stakeholders, including the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education.

Reviews are based on the VRU's *Review Framework*, and carried out on providers' premises by teams of carefully selected and highly trained reviewers. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the planning of the review, and to represent them during review team meetings. Reviewers examine a range of evidence before arriving at a series of judgements and awarding grades for the quality of the provision.

Review grades are awarded on a five-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all or nearly all aspects and is/are exemplary or exceptional in many.
2: Good	This describes provision or an outcome that is/are better than the basic level. Practice will be at least sound and there may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. No major areas of weakness substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. Some features may be good.
4: Below satisfactory	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strength in the provision.
5: Very weak	This describes situations where there are major weaknesses in all, or almost all, areas and where, as a result, learners are very poorly served.

Introduction

Description of the provision

The Modern Institute of Science and Computer was established in 1997, when it opened its main branch in Isa Town. The second branch was opened in Hamad Town in 2000, followed by the third in Arad in 2002, and the fourth in Um Al Hasam in 2008. The institute offers three types of provision: tutorial courses, information technology (IT) courses and general English and conversation courses. Most tutorial courses are offered for school students and based on Ministry of Education curricula, the rest are based on some University modules. The IT courses include Advanced Computer Certificate (ACC), International Computer Driving License (ICDL) which is externally accredited, Oracle, CCNA, CompTIA Network+, CompTIA A+, Visual Basics, AutoCAD, 3D Max, Adobe Photoshop, graphic design, video montage, PHP and ASP.Net. The Modern Institute is an approved centre for ICDL and CompTIA which include A+ and Network+. It is also an approved test centre for ICDL and Pearson VUE for Adobe and Cisco. The general English courses are offered in two main categories; children and adults with each category having five main levels. English conversation courses are offered in four main levels. In addition, Modern Institute offers preparation courses for Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

In 2010, enrolment reached 60932, of which 90 per cent were enrolled on tutorial courses. It should be noted that actual students is a fraction of this as individual students enroll on a range of courses at the institute.

The institute is run by the executive manager, who is the owner, branches manager who also takes care of health, safety and maintenance aspects and three academic department heads for the tutorial programmes, English and IT. The institute also employs one marketing manager, two IT support staff, two messengers and four maintenance staff. Each branch is administered by a branch manager and a separate registration and administration team. A total of 31 administrative and support staff work in the four branches. The institute has a pool of more than 500 part-time teachers in different specialisations.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over five days by a team of seven reviewers. During the review, reviewers observed training sessions, analysed data about the qualifications students achieve and the courses they complete, and talked with managers, trainers, administration and support staff, students, parents and employers.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the Modern Institute of Science and Computer should do to improve.

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Modern Institute's provision is satisfactory overall. Courses and support and guidance provided to students are good, while students' achievement, quality of teaching and leadership and management are satisfactory.

The majority of students gain and develop appropriate knowledge and skills on most courses. However, a minority are not developing appropriate skills suitable for their levels especially on the English courses. Overall retention rate is high ranging between 91 and 95 per cent for the last three years as is expected on such short courses. The overall pass rates in IT and English are above average at 84 and 83 per cent respectively. However, students' attainment was judged as satisfactory in the majority of the observed lessons. Most students have the basic skills to cope with the courses on offer but a few lack sufficient skills for their course levels especially in English. Students are self-motivated and enjoy their learning experience at Modern Institute. A placement test is used by the Institute but this is for the English courses only and even this is sometimes ineffective in placing students at a suitable level. Attendance is satisfactory but inconsistently recorded. Punctuality is not recorded at all and is an issue.

Most teachers have good command of their specialisms. The majority of the observed lessons were planned with clear objectives which were generally shared with students but few lesson plans were used by teachers. Teachers generally succeed in engaging and motivating students well enough but in a minority of IT and English lessons and a significant minority of tutorial lessons, there was insufficient checking of students' understanding and they were insufficiently engaged. In the majority of the IT and English observed lessons, less able students were suitably supported, however, the more able students were insufficiently challenged. In more than one third of the observed tutorial lessons, there was insufficient variety of methods used by teachers to accommodate students' varying needs. In most IT and English lessons observed, teachers assess students work and provide useful feedback. According to samples provided, assessment of written work is adequate although insufficient written feedback is given. Although IT laboratories are suitably equipped and used to promote learning, limited resources are used in tutorial and English lessons.

Modern Institute offers a wide range of tutorial courses for schools' core subjects for primary, intermediate and secondary students. In addition it offers some university modules for foundation levels. It also offers an appropriate range of IT, general and conversation

English courses with progression levels. Most students and stakeholders are very satisfied with the range of courses offered which meet their needs very effectively. Course outlines and contents are available in advance but not always shared with students and stakeholders in advance. In tutorial courses, students are provided with helpful summaries and hand-outs to prepare them for their examinations. The institute gauges local needs through visits conducted to some employers to study their specific needs. A few courses have been customised to meet the specific needs of employers. However, in tutorial and English courses, students are provided with insufficient enrichment activities.

Teachers and staff are helpful and supportive. Teachers are approachable and respond to students' questions during and after classes. They provide extra sessions if needed to clarify areas of doubt. Administration staff are cooperative; they follow up absenteeism and send SMS messages to remind students about course start dates or to inform them of course cancellations. They also respond effectively to students' and stakeholders' queries. ICDL students are provided with good support to help them achieve well such as extra classes, mock examinations and internet cards for trial examinations. Course coordinators provide students with relevant information about their courses. Essential health and safety aspects are in place. However, measures are not communicated to students. Brochures and flyers are detailed and informative but the website is basic. Premises are fit for purpose.

Vision and mission statements are appropriately focused on raising students' achievement. However, the link between general and specific objectives is insufficiently clear, some actions are not focused on the objectives, time scales are not always specific and some performance indicators do not measure how successful actions are in achieving the set objectives. Qualified teachers are recruited and their performance is appropriately monitored through internal lesson observations. However, the identified issues are not always followed up for future improvement. Students' feedback is generally sought, through end of course evaluations which are then aggregated and analysed and in some cases feedback is used to improve the provision. However, parents' and employers' feedback is not routinely sought. No achievement data is kept for the tutorial programmes which make up 90 per cent of the courses offered.

Although students' progress is appropriately measured and assessed on the taught courses, no achievement data is kept on tutorial courses which constitute the majority of the courses offered. Also the data kept for IT and English courses is not aggregated to monitor trends over time. The institute maintains good links with the community including charity organisations and Ministry of Education schools.

Capacity to improve

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Modern Institute has satisfactory capacity to improve. Although overall success rates have declined between 2008 and 2009 from 94 to 75 per cent, it increased slightly to 79 per cent in 2010. The retention rate remained high over the last three years ranging from 91 to 95 per cent as expected on such short courses. Students' achievement is appropriately assessed on all the taught courses. However, no achievement data is kept for tutorial courses which make up around 90 per cent of enrolment for the last two years. Moreover, the data kept for the IT and English courses are not aggregated to monitor trends over time which means that management is missing a powerful tool to oversee students' achievement and plan improvements accordingly.

Modern Institute has appropriate resources to enable improvements to be carried out. The management team is suitably qualified and experienced, administrative and support staff are sufficient and the institute has a large pool of part-time teachers in different disciplines and specialisms. However, senior managers focus more on day to day activities than future strategic planning. Adequate improvements have been made to the provision for the last two years focusing on improving physical and human resources, and expanding the range of the offered courses.

Although Modern Institute's self-evaluation form (SEF) identified some areas for improvement, some of which have been highlighted by the review team, some of the main questions are insufficiently detailed and grades are slightly overestimated. The number of enrolments has increased by 53 per cent between 2008 and 2009 from 35926 to 54905 students and by 10 per cent to 60932 between 2009 and 2010. As noted above, actual student numbers are a fraction of this. Repeat business is good for the last three years ranging between 58 and 64 per cent.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Capacity to Improve	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How effective is teaching?	Grade 3: Satisfactory
How well do courses meet the needs of students and stakeholders?	Grade 2: Good
How well are students guided and supported?	Grade 2: Good
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all students?	Grade 3: Satisfactory

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **Teachers have good command of their specialism.** This was reflected in the accurate explanations and the knowledgeable responses to students' questions.
- **The institute offers a wide range of tutorial courses and an appropriate range of IT and English Language courses with progression levels which meets students' and stakeholders' needs very well.** Parents stated that their children's performance at school had improved as a consequence. This is one of the contributory factors to the, at least, satisfactory progress students make in lessons and over time.
- **Helpful and supportive staff and teachers; ICDL students are provided with very effective and useful support.** Teachers are approachable and respond positively to students' queries during and after lessons. Administration staff are cooperative and responsive and communicate effectively with students and parents. ICDL students are provided with an internet card to enable them to do a trial test, free of charge classes and CDs to prepare them for the final on-line examination.

Areas for improvement

- **A minority of students are not developing their skills according to their levels.** Although the majority of students acquire and develop appropriate knowledge and skills on most of the courses, a minority are not making the progress expected of them, especially on the English courses, particularly in developing their writing skills.
- **Lack of lesson plans and insufficient accommodation of students' varying needs for tutorial courses.** Lesson plans were only used by a few teachers in IT and English courses but even these were insufficiently detailed and did not accommodate the range of learners' needs. In more than one third of tutorial observed lessons, teachers used a limited range of methods to accommodate the varying needs of students. There are cases of lessons where less or more able students' needs are insufficiently addressed and there was no variety in exercises and activities to serve this purpose.
- **Lack of achievement data on tutorial courses which constitute the majority of the courses conducted; although achievement data is kept for IT and English courses, it is not aggregated to monitor trends over time.** As a consequence of this the

Institute is unable to identify and quantify the progress students make, the impact of the teaching and courses on offer and, generally, specific areas for development.

- **Parents' and employers' feedback are insufficiently sought.** Although students' feedback is generally sought through end of course evaluation, parents' feedback however, is insufficiently sought although a few said that it is sometimes taken verbally. Similarly, employers are not updated on their employees' performance and their feedback is not routinely sought.

Recommendations

In order to improve provision, Modern Institute should:

- ensure that all students are gaining skills according to their levels
- plan tutorial courses effectively to accommodate the varying needs of students
- ensure that achievement data is kept, aggregated and analysed to monitor trends over time and used to improve provision
- collect parents' and employers' feedback systematically and take the necessary actions accordingly.