



Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Al Moalem Institute
Seef District
Kingdom of Bahrain**

Date Reviewed: 4-7 May 2015

VO032-C3-R005

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Introduction

The Directorate Vocational Reviews (DVR), which is a part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA), conducted this review over four days, by a team of seven reviewers. For this review, reviewers observed training sessions and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieve, examined learners' written and other work, examined documents and the materials provided by the provider and talk with learners, employers, trainers, management and support staff.

In the previous review, the Al Moalem Institute's overall effectiveness was judged as good as are all other aspects of its provision.

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations about what the provider should do to improve.

Grading scale:

Outstanding	1	Good	2	Satisfactory	3	Inadequate	4
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Table of review judgements awarded

Main Question	Judgement
Learners' achievement	Good (2)
Effectiveness of teaching / training and assessment	Good (2)
Quality of programmes	Outstanding (1)
Quality of support and guidance	Outstanding (1)
Effectiveness of leadership, management and governance	Good (2)
Capacity to improve	Good (2)
Overall effectiveness	Good (2)

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?

Grade: Good (2)

The overall effectiveness of AMI is good. Apart from the quality of programmes and the effectiveness of support and guidance which are graded as outstanding, all other aspects are graded as good. Most learners complete their courses successfully, make good progress from their prior attainment, and gain and develop effective vocational skills, knowledge and competencies relevant to their level, yet a few of the learners do not master their skills upon course completion or do not make the expected progress.

Courses are offered based on good understanding of the local market needs. Courses are effectively structured, planned, resourced and regularly updated to highly match the specific needs of learners and stakeholders. The learning experience is enriched through a range of useful and relevant extra-curricular activities. These courses are conducted in pleasant, safe and well-equipped learning environment and are delivered by qualified and experienced trainers. AMI trainers plan and deliver their sessions using a good range of training methods and activities to engage, motivate and meet learners' varying needs. Trainers assess learners' performance effectively and records are well-maintained; instant useful verbal feedback is provided to learners, however written feedback on learners' work is insufficiently constructive, particularly in the technical courses. Learners at AMI are supported and guided effectively to achieve better outcomes; very useful induction is always provided at the start of a course, and learners have access to additional relevant material and mock examinations to prepare them well for their external online examinations. Learners who need more support to improve their achievement are offered extra free sessions and high achievers are rewarded for their achievement.

Strategic planning is well-focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of the provision. AMI has an effective quality assurance system in place. Results of learners' achievement are closely monitored, however the verification and moderation processes are inconsistently conducted. Qualified staff are recruited, effectively deployed and inducted, and sufficiently monitored. Although, the internal lesson observations are carried out regularly, the follow-up visits when needed are not conducted in a timely manner.

Capacity to improve

How strong is the provider's capacity to improve the quality of learning?

Grade: Good (2)

AMI has good capacity to improve. The institute's strategic plan is well-structured based on critical self-evaluation process and is focused on improving learners' achievement and the quality of the provision; it is well-monitored by a detailed action plan. A good range of recently developed initiatives have been started particularly for broadening the range of courses offered by adding new courses specifically in engineering such as AutoCAD, Primavera, STADD Pro and Revit Architecture. These courses were demanded by the stakeholders and were conducted several times. Furthermore, AMI has increased its affiliations to include a number of awarding and professional bodies to expand the range of the courses offered particularly in the field of ICT and Human Resource Management. Currently, the management is working on developing and automating the institute's systems through the use of a customised Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) to facilitate a computerised and real-time record keeping, easier analysis of learners' performance and communication with stakeholders.

The institute has capable human resources and sufficient physical resources to carry out its improvement plans. AMI management and staff are competent and the institute utilises a pool of qualified part-time trainers. Also, the institute recruited four full-time trainers since the last QQA review. Effective quality assurance arrangement, relevant policies and procedures are in place. The number of enrolment is maintained between 2012 and 2014 with good repeat business where significant minority of the sponsoring companies being retained.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: Good (2)

Most learners gain and develop effective knowledge, vocational skills and competencies relevant to their chosen courses and levels. Learners' attainment is at least good in the majority of the observed sessions and satisfactory in the rest. Furthermore, most interviewed learners and employers find the attended courses at AMI beneficial for their workplace and personal life. Most learners make good progress compared to their prior attainment and their entry level. This is evident from the comparison between pre- and post-course

assessments and the standards of learners' produced work. However, a few learners do not master their skills as required upon course completion and their added value from the courses is minimal particularly in ICT and soft skills courses.

For the last three years, almost all learners achieved successfully the qualifications or course objectives they aim for in a timely manner. Overall success and retention rates are high at 99% and 100% respectively. The analysis of records shows that 33% of learners are enrolled in the 'Management Certification which is an externally-accredited programme where the overall success rate is 100%. The Health and Safety (H&S) externally-accredited courses constitute 40% of the total enrollment where 98% of learners successfully achieve their award certifications. In technical software courses such as AutoCAD, Primavera and STADD Pro which represents 4%, the overall success rate is 99%; learners' final scored marks are well above the minimum passing marks. The current and first batch of Association of Accounting Technicians programme (AAT) makes only 1% and learners have successfully achieved the first three modules of the programme and their modules' pass rates are higher than the international pass rates. The local completion courses represent 22% from the total enrollment, all learners have successfully achieved the course objectives they aim for. Learners' achievement is sufficiently and reliably measured in these courses. Effective summative and formative assessments are used to measure learners' achievement throughout the course. However, the internal assessments carried out are inconsistently moderated or verified.

Learners are self-motivated and show positive attitude towards their learning which is reflected in their interactive with their trainers during the observed sessions and by their confident responses. The majority of learners reflect critically on how well they are progressing. This is most evident in the observed sessions through the way they give explanations and relevant examples to their trainers, and questioning and challenging trainers and their colleagues. Additionally, learners are requested to fill a form, in which they reflect on the level of their progress and how beneficial are the courses to their workplace. Most learners are able to work well independently as seen in the class activities and exercises and are able to work collaboratively when given the opportunities.

AMI has a clear attendance and punctuality policy which is shared with learners. Attendance records are always kept while the punctuality is inconsistently recorded. Learners attend regularly and usually on time. The overall attendance rates are high for the past three years and ranging between 92% and 98%. The institute follow-up in cases of absenteeism or lateness. However, from the observed sessions, a few learners are coming late.

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching/training and assessment in promoting learning?

Grade: Good (2)

AMI trainers have good command of their specialism and use effective vocationally-related examples and real life cases especially in H&S, technical software and management courses. In addition, they are knowledgeable, provide accurate explanations and respond professionally to learners' questions. Most observed sessions are delivered well and are timely managed, and objectives are shared with learners; trainers start with effective recapitulation and end with beneficial summary including what have been learnt and what will be covered next. Trainers use detailed lesson plans with clear objectives which are informed by prior and continuous assessments. These plans takes into account the pre-course screening, expectations of learners and analysis of pre-assessment; therefore learners' varying needs are well addressed through different class activities that suits both ends the less and more able learners.

Trainers use a variety of training methods and activities to attract and engage learners effectively. Several examples cited where learners are engaged in the practical application of activities in H&S and technical software courses in addition to fruitful discussions and explanations, effective role plays and presentations. The learning resources and materials are well utilised to facilitate the delivery of the training. This includes effective use of data show, clear and informative power point presentation, white board, hand-outs, videos, websites, and up-to-date software and hardware. The majority of trainers use further questioning to stimulate critical thinking; learners are challenged to give further explanations, using sufficient life-long learning stimulating situations such as real life cases and scenarios and in many cases sessions turned into learners' centered whereby learners motivated to think and act critically.

Formative and summative assessments are used to evaluate learners' understanding that are mostly well-focused on achieving course objectives. It is revealed from the observed sessions that trainers effectively check learners' understanding where learners' are targeted with relevant follow-up questions and answers, given situations and hands-on practical activities to test their understanding and fulfilling the tasks. Learners are also assessed sufficiently by summative assessments through post-course assessment, projects and externally-accredited online examinations. Although AMI have a clear and well informed rubric, in a few cases, correction is insufficiently rigorous. Learners are provided with effective verbal feedback, however learners are not always provided with constructive written feedback particularly on the technical software courses. Trainers always maintained and regularly update records of learners' performance.

How well programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

AMI is highly responsive to learners' and stakeholders' needs. The institute precisely sense the market needs through different methods such as market surveys, marketing team visits, social media, and direct contact with employers. Senior managers use the analysis of all the above and the outcomes of the national market studies to inform the provision. Marketing staff monitor different media for relevant articles on market requirements and new trends in the local and global context. Courses are effectively customised to meet specific needs of stakeholders. One such exemplary course is the 'Management Certification' by the American Society of Management Consulting (ASMC) which consists of six modules. This programme is highly demanded as one third of the total number of learners was enrolled since the last review. Another example is the 'chemical safety' course which was well customised with highly relevant assessment that match proficiently the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and the employer's specific needs.

Courses are effectively planned and structured which highly match the ILOs through related theoretical and practical assessments that allows good acquisition of knowledge and development of skills. Furthermore, AMI uses online customisable soft skills courseware 'Velsoft' to deliver the local completion courses, the institute effectively plan and customise these courses with sufficient activities such as case studies, in-class activities and administer related formative assessment to match the course objectives. These courses represent only 22% from the conducted courses. AMI has detailed course outlines that are shared with learners and stakeholders in advance.

Courses are well-resourced to meet the needs of learners and stakeholders, and which correspondingly match industry standards. The laboratories have sufficient computers with the most updated software to deliver the technical software courses. Health and safety courses have sufficient range of resources such as First Aid kits and dummies. Learners are provided with authentic books, supplementary and guided materials for local completion courses. Almost all courses are reviewed and updated on a regular basis in terms of content, assessment methods and structure to meet the needs of learners' and stakeholders; the institute has effective policy and procedure to ensure regular review and update of courses. The provider communicate with the relevant awarding body regularly and incorporate all updates regarding ILOs, modules and examinations.

The courses are well supported with useful and relevant extra-curricular activities to enrich the learning experience and enhance the courses. Such activities include speeches delivered by motivational speakers, external visits to employers, and discussion of tasks or projects relevant to learners' study or workplace. Learners are expected to fill a form that gathers

feedback on the effectiveness of these activities and how they will be useful for their workplace.

The provider implements clear and effective access and entry-level mechanisms for programmes. The targeted audience is specified clearly along with the pre-requisites for courses. AMI screen learners upon registration based on their professional experience and educational background and make the necessary changes if needed such as course content or language.

How well learners are supported and guided?

Grade: Outstanding (1)

Al Moalem Institute has a highly effective, comprehensive and systematic support and guidance mechanism which helped learners throughout their learning process to achieve better learning outcomes. Learners are provided with a very useful induction session on the first day of the course to familiarise them with aspects relevant to their learning such as general course rules and regulations, assessment methods and marks distribution, attendance and punctuality policy, sharing health and safety arrangements and the available facilities at AMI. Additionally, staff provide learners with the student pack that contains relevant information about courses, progression routes, AMI policies and relevant contacts details. These information are also available on AMI's informative website. Staff respond effectively to inquiries through emails, calls and social media. They also help learners in registering for their online examinations on the externally-accredited courses and if needed resolve issues with the awarding body which are relevant to learners' study. In addition, AMI has clear policy on support and grievance together with an effective screening process. Learners are well supported to achieve better on different courses. Those needed more support are offered extra free sessions and other gifted learners are rewarded for their achievement. Learners are provided with access to additional relevant material and mock examinations to prepare them well for their external online examinations. For example, AAT's trainer utilises the online mock examination results and learners' performance at sessions to address areas of doubt prior to the final examination. Also, English language support is provided to AAT learners along with extra activities and free sessions. AMI has translated materials in bi-lingual Arabic and English; especially in health and safety courses where trainers use different languages inside the sessions. Learners on Nebosh, MEDIC and technical software courses are supported with extra cases, activities, sessions and glossary.

The learning environment is pleasant with access to good facilities. Classrooms and laboratories are fit-for-purpose and well-equipped with the necessary learning aids and resources. However, only one laboratory is congested, as the number of workstations do not suit the available space. A useful library with relevant books and magazines is in place

where learners could utilise them in their study area. Learners and stakeholders have access to course information prior to a course via different means such as brochures, social media and website which are all up-to-date and has accurate and useful information. AMI keeps close communication with stakeholders to inform them on learners' performance such as their attendance, progress and achievement results. Also, comprehensive performance reports are provided to them upon course completion. The arrangements for the delivery and scheduling of the courses are highly flexible to suit the needs of stakeholders, for instant, adjusting the duration of the course, and changing training venue, timing and delivery language. However, in few cases, learners shared concerns about the unsuitable course timing and postponing of a few courses.

Leadership management and governance

How effective are leadership, management and governance in raising achievement and improving the quality of the provision?

Grade: Good (2)

Al Moalem Institute has clear vision and mission statements that are shared with staff and learners. The management team developed a comprehensive five years strategic plan (2014-2018) with specific goals and relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) focused towards improving learners' achievement and raising the standards of training. This plan is translated into a detailed yearly improvement action plan with clear targets and are cascaded into specific actions, responsibilities and timescale with effective monitoring mechanisms. These plans are based on the self-evaluation processes through the periodical management review carried out by the institute to identify non-confirmation to the quality procedures and to monitor the KPIs. Detailed quality audit reports are produced and are discussed in the staff and management meetings as well in the Advisory Council (AC) meetings. The institute's QQA Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) submitted for the review is fairly informative with reference to the supporting evidence, the grades are sufficiently realistic on most aspects and identifies a range of appropriate improvements' actions.

AMI has effective arrangements and procedures to quality assure its provision. The institute's internal quality management system manual is detailed, and procedures are continuously updated as needed. For example, the institute has clear policy and procedures for assessing and utilising learners' prior attainment through the learners' pre-training questionnaires form and pre-course assessments where the outcomes are effectively used in lesson planning and delivery. On the other hand, the Internal Verification (IV) process is in place, however it is inconsistently implemented across all courses. The better IV completed forms identify relevant issues and suggest recommendations for further improvement.

Learners' achievement and performance on all courses are well-monitored. Records of learners' performance are maintained and aggregated effectively. Useful analysis and comparison over years is carried out and the findings are discussed in the review programme meetings.

The current organisational structure is fit-for-purpose for the size of the institute and the training programmes offered to meet its aims and objectives. There are clearly defined roles, job responsibilities and accountabilities for all staff. AMI is well-resourced by competent full-time staff and a pool of highly qualified local and international trainers with the right experience who are able to carry out the duties. The structure is supported by AC members who monitor the overall performance through some pre-set indicators and suggest actions addressing the identified issues. Staff are effectively deployed, and policies and procedures, and relevant manuals are shared with them. Furthermore, regular management and staff meetings are held for follow-up and monitoring. Staff appraisal is annually carried out by a thorough training needs analysis with clear measurement indicators and against certain criteria which state the strength and areas of development where staff key results area are well-monitored. All staff are provided with sufficient development opportunities which are based on their field and appraisal. Effectiveness of the quality of training is assured through an effective lessons' observations scheme; the trainers' performance is regularly monitored through a useful observation form that is filled critically. A useful written feedback is provided to trainers for further improvement. Trainers are observed once every course mostly by the managing director; when needed the follow-up visits are not timely carried out or they are conducted as short informal visits within the same observed course.

Very useful links are maintained with employers, local relevant organisations, regional and international partners, and awarding bodies. Learners and stakeholders' views are systematically collected by different methods; they are suitably aggregated and monitored by the management and issues are identified usually for follow-up and where needed, the outcomes are utilised by the management to improve the provision.

Clear and detailed health and safety policy, procedures and equipment are in place. The learning environment is safe and free of obvious hazards. All health and safety essentials are in place; maintained regularly and systematically monitored. AMI has a qualified and trained staff on first aid and handling emergency cases. Regular risk assessment and periodically fire drill are carried out. Additionally, completed workplace inspection checklists are used for internal facilities and when external venues are used. Learners' feedback stated that health and safety precautions are shared with most of them and they are trained to deal with emergency in case it happens. Also, health and safety instructions are displayed all around the institute.

The provider's key strengths

- The well-structured strategic and improvement action plans focused towards improving learners' achievements which are suitably informed by critical self-evaluation processes and monitored by effective mechanisms
- Acquirement and development of useful vocational skills, knowledge and competencies which are relevant to learners' level
- The good progress is made by most learners from their prior attainment and the achievement of the qualifications and course objectives they are aiming for
- Qualified trainers who provide highly relevant vocational examples and real life cases and use good training methods and activities to engage and motivate learners
- Courses effectively structured and planned which are well-resourced to match the specific needs of learners' and stakeholders
- Highly effective support provided to learners to help them achieve better outcomes.

Recommendations

In order to improve, AMI should:

- Improve the quality of learning and teaching by:
 - ensuring that learners further develop skills and are successfully achieving their qualifications
 - providing learners with more constructive written feedback.

- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - enhancing the verification process to be more consistent and rigorous across all courses
 - ensuring the follow-up class observation is conducted in a timely manner as needed.

Appendix

Description of the provision

Al Moalem Institute (AMI) was established in 1992 and it is licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL). The institute offers a range of externally-accredited and local completion courses in various areas of learning such as occupational health and safety, management and leadership, soft skills, finance and accounting, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and technical software courses such as AutoCAD, Primavera, Revit Architecture and STADD Pro. The institute has affiliations with a number of international awarding bodies such as The National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH) of UK, Association of Business Executives (ABE) of UK, The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) of UK, Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) of UK, OSHAcademy, Autodesk, Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) of UK, and Medic First Aid of US.

The institute has one branch located at Seef District. AMI operates by a general manager who is the owner as well, four full-time trainers and ten staff distributed among the sales and marketing, administration and finance, and human resource with two more staff in general services. All are employed on a full-time basis. The institute has a pool of local and international part-time trainers who are utilised as and when needed. The institute has an Advisory Council (AC) chaired by the owner of the institute and consists of four members from the education and training fields.

The institute has enrolled a total of 1532 learners since the last QQA's review, 238 learners in 2012, 426 in 2013, 569 in 2014 and 299 in 2015 up to the date of this review. The majority of learners enrolled are sponsored by their employers. The externally-accredited courses constitute 78% of the total enrolment number for the past three years while the rest are enrolled in the local completion courses. 51% of the externally-accredited courses are health and safety while 44% are management and the rest are finance and technical software courses.