



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

# **Vocational Review Unit**

## **Review Report**

**Al Moalem Institute**  
**Manama - Kingdom of Bahrain**

**Date Reviewed: 10 -12 November 2009**

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## The Vocational Review Unit

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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:

| <b>Grade description</b> | <b>Interpretation</b>                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 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 outcomes 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 strengths 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**

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### **Description of the provision**

Al-Moalem Institute (AMI) started its training activities in 1989. AMI offers a range of externally accredited and non-accredited programmes in aspects of health and safety, management, supervision, leadership, quality management (ISO 9001), human resources, self-development, soft skills, and IT and computer-based applications. Externally accredited programmes are also on offer from the National Examination Board of Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH), the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), the Royal Institute of Public Health (RIPH), the Association of Business Executives (ABE) and the CADD Centre of India. Over the last three years, 19% of the learners have been enrolled on externally accredited courses, 48% on non-accredited but internally assessed courses, and the rest on non-accredited short courses. Almost half the learners are employees sponsored by their employers; the others are self-sponsored walk-in learners. In 2008, AMI trained 681 learners across its programmes.

AMI employs four full-time trainers and a number of part-time trainers. The institute is headed by a managing director. Five administrative and support staff work on a full-time basis. AMI is registered to the international quality management system ISO-9001.

### **Scope of the review**

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

This report summarises reviewers' findings and their recommendations for improvement.

## Overall judgement

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### Effectiveness of provision

#### Grade 3: satisfactory

The overall effectiveness of Al-Moalem Institute (AMI) is satisfactory. Learners achieve satisfactorily. Teaching and training is good. The quality of programmes and the support and guidance provided to learners at AMI are satisfactory. The leadership and management satisfactorily support learners and drive improvement.

Learners at AMI achieve appropriate new vocational knowledge, skills and attitudes. They are motivated and enjoy their courses. The overall retention rate for all courses is high, standing at 95% for the past three years. On the internally assessed courses, learners achieve high success rates, averaging 92%. These courses are assessed by the trainer and are not subject to an internal verification process. On the externally accredited courses, success rates are satisfactory or better. On non-accredited courses, however, learners' achievements are not sufficiently assessed.

Teaching and training are particularly good at AMI. Trainers use a wide range of effective training methods and activities to motivate and encourage learners during training sessions. AMI trainers are appropriately qualified and have a command of their vocational specialisms, which is reflected satisfactorily in their use of practical experience and real-life examples in sessions, and their ability to link theoretical knowledge and vocational practices. They assess learners' work well and provide helpful feedback. Lessons are adequately planned and managed effectively. Trainers start sessions effectively with a useful recap on previous learning, by means of questioning or short quizzes, and at the end of the session trainers summarise to learners what has been covered. Initial assessment is generally used appropriately and learners' expectations and objectives are properly assessed. The checking of learners' prior knowledge and experience on non-accredited courses, however, has only occurred during 2009 and the outcomes are not yet effectively used to plan sessions so that the varying needs of learners are catered for.

AMI offers a satisfactory range of non-accredited, internally assessed and externally accredited courses. Employers are consulted before a course and AMI customises some non-accredited courses at the request of employers. The longer and externally accredited courses offer insufficient learning enrichment activities. AMI does not comprehensively assess labour market needs to help shape its range of courses.

Trainers and staff support learners adequately before, during and sometimes after the programme. Their follow-up on learners' absenteeism and lateness is particularly effective.

AMI takes adequate measures to ensure that staff and learners are working in a safe and healthy environment. Learners are always briefed on the institute's health and safety policies at the beginning of a course. Learners on AMI's premises are covered by an insurance policy for accidents and injuries. AMI takes appropriate measures to combat the current H1N1 virus outbreak. AMI recognise high achievers by posting their names and photographs on notice boards inside the premises. Learners have access to suitable learning resources

AMI's managers have recently introduced a number of practices that have helped to improve the overall effectiveness of the provision. Such practices have improved the monitoring of staff performance, the gathering and analysing of learners' views and the monitoring of learners' achievements, especially in the externally accredited courses. Learners' achievements are satisfactorily evaluated for internally assessed and externally accredited courses; records are kept well and monitored by AMI's managers. For example, managers thoroughly discussed declining results on a NEBOSH course and prepared a detailed action plan to improve results. AMI has well-structured and relevant plans for further improvement. Despite recent efforts, AMI's system of gathering and analysing employers' views is not yet effective.

## **Capacity to improve**

### **Grade 2: good**

AMI has a good record of improvements, most notably in the last year. The institute is now registered to the international quality management system ISO-9001 and has improved its internal quality management system and record-keeping significantly. AMI has an active and effective quality coordination function for this purpose.

AMI has increased its portfolio of courses substantially, introducing appropriate externally accredited courses such as the certificates from ABE and LCCI courses. In addition, a number of extra internally assessed, non-accredited courses in ICT and other general business and soft skills were added in 2008 and 2009.

The institute has recently introduced pre- and post-course assessments for non-accredited courses .A new form has been devised to measure the impact of training on the performance, skills and attitude of learners at their workplaces. These innovations have still to be used widely across the provision. A new employers' satisfaction form has not produced a good response yet.

A new and well-structured staff performance appraisal system is in place. Appraisal, of trainers in particular, is directly linked to learners' retention and success rates, learners' satisfaction, and the overall grade from the internal lesson observation system. Staff are set individual targets based on the institute's set business plans. The recently developed approach to internal lesson observations has clear and relevant criteria against which to assess the performance of trainers. Trainers are consistently observed, and told the grades of their observation. This system is not yet being used effectively to identify clear areas for trainers' improvement.

AMI has well-structured business plans that focus on 10 areas of the business. Each area has a number of relevant actions, targets and key performance indicators. The plans are new and their implementation has not yet been monitored. The self-evaluation form (SEF) compiled in preparation for this review by key staff is reasonably detailed and highlights some of the key areas of improvement required. The SEF reflects AMI's capacity to analyse its strengths and weaknesses sufficiently.

The institute's website has been revamped to provide sufficient and useful guidance for learners on the programmes available. AMI has recently equipped all its classrooms with wireless internet connection. To improve support to learners, AMI now insures learners against accidents and injuries on its premises. AMI is in the planning stages of building a new campus.

## Summary of grades awarded

| Overall judgement                                                                               | Grade                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Effectiveness of provision                                                                      | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| Capacity to improve                                                                             | Grade 2: good         |
| <b>Review findings</b>                                                                          |                       |
| How well do learners achieve?                                                                   | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| How effective is training?                                                                      | Grade 2: good         |
| How well do programmes meet the needs of learners and employers?                                | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| How well are learners guided and supported?                                                     | Grade 3: satisfactory |
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | Grade 3: satisfactory |

## Main judgements and recommendations

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### Strengths

- **Training methods and activities.** Trainers use well a wide range of training methods and activities to motivate and encourage learners; group work, open discussion, direct questioning case studies and homework are all used to good effect. In one session, for example, the trainer asked learners to choose a relevant topic, research it and discuss it with the rest of the group. Learning aids are adequate and appropriately used.
- **Assessment of learners' work.** Trainers assess and check learners' understanding effectively at the beginning and during assessed and externally accredited courses, through questions and answers, short quizzes and post-course assessments. Learners receive helpful feedback, individually or in groups. Trainers always provide helpful and constructive written feedback on learners' written work, exams and assignments.
- **Follow up on absenteeism and lateness.** AMI effectively monitors and follows up on absenteeism and lateness among sponsored learners, with regular reports to employers. Learners with good punctuality and attendance receive special awards. Learners who are frequently absent or late are asked to prepare action reports to improve their attendance and punctuality.
- **Performance appraisal system.** AMI has introduced a well-structured system of performance appraisal for full-time staff. The appraisal of trainers in particular is weighted clearly and appropriately to take account of retention and success rates, the overall grade from the internal lesson observation system and some key areas linked with the institute's business plans. The key development areas for each member of staff are clearly identified and agreed at the beginning of the year. The system is new and currently operates for the full-time staff only.

### Areas for improvement

- **Measuring and recording learners' achievements on non-accredited courses.** AMI does not rigorously measure and record learners' progress or achievements on non-accredited courses. All learners who attend for 75% or more of their scheduled hours are awarded a certificate of completion. This approach is insufficient and does not present an accurate reflection of learners' achievement, progress or attainment.

- **Enrichment activities on accredited and assessed courses.** The enrichment activities on non-accredited courses are satisfactory, taking the form of some purposeful exercises that add to learners' experience and knowledge. However, insufficient enrichment activities are provided to learners on longer, accredited courses.
- **The analysis of labour market needs.** AMI does not carry out sufficiently comprehensive labour market analysis to help shape its range of programmes. It relies mainly on information gathered through employers' enquiries.
- **The gathering and analysis of employers' views.** AMI does not systematically gather or analyse employers' views. Although staff members occasionally telephone employers, there is no established system for this and employers' views and concerns are not always recorded and followed up. AMI has recently devised an employer satisfaction form for this purpose but very few employers have responded so far.
- **Use of the trainer observation system.** Trainers are consistently observed, using an observation system that has clear and relevant criteria. The system is not, however, used effectively to identify ways for trainers to improve their practice. The observation results in grades only, which are shared with trainers. It does not identify areas for improvement.

## Recommendations

In order to improve, AMI should:

- develop a system to measure reliably learners' achievements on non-accredited courses
- enrich all courses with more activities that give learners experience of real vocational practices
- analyse labour market needs systematically and comprehensively
- ensure that employers' views are gathered and analysed consistently and use the outcomes to improve the provision
- use the trainer observation system effectively to identify relevant areas for improvement and recommendations for the trainer.