



الهيئة الوطنية
للمؤهلات وضمان جودة التعليم والتدريب
National Authority for Qualifications &
Quality Assurance of Education & Training

Directorate of Vocational Reviews Review Report

**Al-Madrassa for Arts
Hamala
Kingdom of Bahrain**

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The Directorate of Vocational Reviews

The Directorate of Vocational Reviews (DVR) is part of the National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training (QQA) that was officially set up in 2008 as an independent body governed and supervised by the Council of Ministers. Established to raise standards in vocational education and training, the DVR 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 DVR'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 four-point scale:

Grade description	Interpretation
1: Outstanding	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least good in all aspects and outstanding in the majority.
2: Good	This describes provision or outcomes that is/are at least satisfactory in all aspects and good in the majority. There may be some particularly successful approaches or outcomes.
3: Satisfactory	This describes a basic level of adequacy. There are no major areas of weakness which substantially affect what learners, or significant groups of learners, achieve. There may be some features which are good.
4: Inadequate	This describes situations where major weaknesses in some areas affect the outcomes for learners and outweigh any strengths in the provision.

Introduction

Description of the provision

Al-Madrassa for Arts was established in 2005. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer courses in art and design. Currently the institute offers three long accredited courses leading to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level and Advanced (A) level in Arts and design from Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) of the UK. The centre also offers very short non-accredited art workshops in the summer that complement the long programmes.

Al-Madrassa for Arts is located in Hamala village. The centre is managed and run by a husband and wife, who are also the only teachers at the centre. They also employ one part-time finance and IT manager as well as one full-time security guard. Since the last review conducted in December 2011, the centre has enrolled a total of 77 learners; 32 in 2012, 27 in 2013 and 18 in 2014 up to the date of review. All of these learners are self-sponsored.

Scope of the review

This review was conducted over three days, by a team of four reviewers. During the review, reviewers attended lessons and other related activities, analysed data about the courses and qualifications learners achieved, examined learners' written and other work, studied documents and the materials provided by the centre and met with management/teachers, and learners.

In the previous review, the overall effectiveness of the institute was judged to be good as were learners' achievement, the quality of training, the quality of the programmes offered, the support and guidance, and leadership and management were all judged good. The provider's capacity to improve was judged satisfactory.

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

Table of review judgements awarded

Overall Effectiveness	
How effective is the provision in raising learners' achievement and meeting the full range of learners' and stakeholders' needs?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Learners' Achievement	
How well do learners achieve?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Quality of Provision	
How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?	Grade: 2 Good
How well do programmes meet the needs and interests of learners and stakeholders?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory
Leadership and Management	
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Review judgements

Overall effectiveness

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The overall effectiveness of Al-Madrassa for Arts is satisfactory, as are all other aspects of the provision except the effectiveness of teaching, which is good with most learners, are enabled to gain appropriate and relevant arts skills as well as the qualifications they aim for. While the teachers have clear vision and interest to guide and support the learners to develop their individual art approach and provide a good role model to them, they do not ensure that proper course documentation including explicit and pre-defined assessment criteria are available and shared with the learners. Generally, courses are neither formally planned and structured nor systematically reviewed or updated by the provider. Nevertheless, the range of courses has a high reputation, particularly the externally-accredited ones. Learners enjoy their learning and take pride in their work across the range of courses that match their needs and aspirations. The small management team is sufficient for the current operation and has clear focus on closely monitoring learners' individual work and achievement. However, the institute does not have explicit procedures, data and clear system for more effective action planning and for assuring the overall quality of the provision.

The Al-Madrassa for Arts has a satisfactory capacity to improve. Despite the insufficient formal action planning and most practices are not covered by explicit written procedures, the human and physical resources are just sufficient to sustain the operation of the centre and to cater for the needs of learners adequately and support their progress. The management team has taken a few actions towards addressing the recommendations of the last review, particularly related to health and safety, and the collection and analysis of learners' feedback. In addition, a very useful recent analysis of learners' achievement trends with relevant comparisons with international rates has been produced that highlights areas for follow-up yet the impact of this is to be seen. The submitted Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) is informative and indicates sufficient awareness of some areas for development and provides reference to the summary analysis of learners' achievement and feedback. The centre maintains sufficient repeat business where approximately one third of the IGCSE learners come back to take AS level. Learners' achievement improved in 2012 to higher than the international rate compared with 2011. However it dipped again in 2013.

Learners' achievement

How well do learners achieve?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Learners' achievement is satisfactory overall. Most of learners develop appropriate skills and knowledge related to arts as revealed from the level of produced artwork in the observed lessons and during the annual exhibition held at Al Madrasa for Arts premises. Learners' testimonies during meetings' and through surveys also indicate that they gain useful specific drawing skills and new techniques. Almost all learners who enrol on the IGCSE, AS-level, A-level courses and sit for the CIE (Cambridge International Examination) to achieve their qualification resulting on a pass rate of 98%. While the overall retention rates across all courses exceeds 95%, which indicate a high satisfaction by the learners particularly for the long courses, approximately one third of the IGCSE learners proceed to the AS level and just above one quarter of learners on the AS level learners proceed to A level at the Al Madrasa for Art and maintain adequate progress.

Overall, the achievement rates for 2012 were higher than the international rates across the three externally accredited courses. However, the IGCSE and AS level achievement rates dropped in comparison with the international rates in 2013. Whereas 100% of the IGCSE learners achieved C or better with 18% achieved A* or above in 2012, only 33% achieved C and the remaining scored lower than C in 2013. The international rates for the IGCSE in 2012 and 2013 were 67% and 65% respectively for the C or better grades. In 2013, the AS level rate was slightly lower than the international rate as it reached to 25% for the C or above grades compared with the international rate of 29%.

The learners show high self-motivation and enjoy their learning experience to a good extent as observed from the lessons and while exhibiting their artwork for the public. Most learners are also self-motivated to complete their work at home outside of the class hours and make it available for next lessons. Observing and talking to the learners during the lessons and the exhibition revealed that most learners take pride of their work and are able generally to reflect on how to improve their skills, as they are always taught how to constructively criticize their work and be critical when evaluating others' artwork as part of the course. Learners, in general, are self-directed and able to work independently on their own artwork reflecting their personal styles, abilities and inner thoughts. During the lessons and prior to selecting a topic for their final examination, learners set in a group and brainstorm their ideas, search the internet using their own devices or getting inspired using few of the magazines and books provided by the institute. The majority of learners attend regularly with an overall attendance rate of 75%. Attendance is recorded, yet punctuality is not.

The quality of provision

How effective is teaching and/or training in promoting learning?

Grade: 2 Good

Al-Madrasa for Arts' teachers are well-qualified in their field and have relevant subject knowledge and experience. Teaching methods are mostly learner-centred with a focus on learning by doing and enabling learners to develop their own ideas and techniques in art. Learners at Al Madrasa for Art have the option of using a variety of media and also encouraged to experiment with and learn about other techniques. Moreover, the teaching methods applied stimulate learners' critical attitude and self-evaluation. Teachers deploy their experience to successfully engage and motivate learners. However, learners are not engaged fully during the initial theoretical part of lessons. Adequate learning resources and materials are utilized to deliver the lessons and appropriately further learners' understanding.

Lessons are planned on an ad-hoc basis to provide a personalised methodology of teaching by considering learners' individual needs. Teachers are responsive to the needs of all learners, which are accommodated effectively during and after the lessons. Lessons start on time where teachers address all learners together, after which they spend a significant amount of time with each learner individually. Nonetheless, lessons are not always timely managed. Course objectives are shared with learners at the beginning of the school year, and the lesson objectives are normally communicated to them in each lesson.

For the internationally accredited courses IGCSE, AS and A levels, learners' work is externally assessed by the CIE. In addition, learners are continuously assessed by the teachers during the lessons and provided with constructive individual feedback. The work and the process are both discussed by the teacher with each learner within the lesson or privately after the lesson. Furthermore, teachers encourage learners to critique their own work through identifying what they need to do to improve. However, no explicit predefined assessment criteria are shared with learners. Although actual learners' works are kept to be assessed by the CIE, register of learners' progress is not effectively maintained by the provider to trace learners' progress.

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

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Al-Madrassa for Art offers a range of internationally accredited and non-accredited courses in arts and design. The internationally accredited courses are recognized by the CIE and offered at three levels, these are: IGCSE, AS and A levels. To cater for learners who prefer to learn art in a casual environment, the provider offers very short summer courses as well as private courses. Learners are also provided with the opportunity to pursue the internationally accredited courses without sitting the final examination by the CIE. The vast majority of learners find the range of courses matching their needs and aspirations. Courses at Al-Madrassa for Art are offered to serve a niche market aiming to fill the gap in the formal and internationally accredited art qualifications prior to university level, targeting learners aged 12 years and above. Yet, insufficient attempts are taken to pursue a formal way to sense the wider local market needs and opportunities for arts courses. Currently, the provider is in the process of expanding its range of offerings to include courses for the visually-impaired learners.

Curriculum content and overview of the internationally accredited courses are available, which include some details of the different techniques to be taught, materials required, references and recommended readings. For the non-accredited courses, a scheme of work is in place. The set of learning objectives is modified to cater for different learners' needs and abilities. However, courses in general are not planned and structured formally. Moreover, course contents are not systematically reviewed or updated by the provider.

Courses are well-resourced and enriched adequately with extra-curricular activities to enhance the learning experience. The drawing hall is equipped with the required resources for course delivery, such as portable easels, chairs, sink for clean-up and lighting kits. Furthermore, 'printing press' has been recently added to the available range of media at the institute. The provider organizes an annual exhibition in which learners' achievements are presented and exposed to scrutiny by the general public and visiting artists. The purpose of the exhibition is to give learners a professional exhibition experience and to build their self-confidence.

How well are learners supported and guided to achieve better outcomes?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

Support and guidance provided to learners is satisfactory overall. Teachers utilize their professional expertise to support learners adequately in order to achieve their personal objectives, whether for academic or leisure reasons. Learners see their teachers as helpful, approachable and supportive overall, especially when a learner needs to master a new skill. Learners in general, receive verbal brief introduction about courses and when applicable advice on the examination process. However, the information on course details shared prior to the registration is not always sufficient. Nevertheless, learners are allowed to register and pay for a month as a trial for a course and are allowed to withdraw if they wish. Programmes offerings are suitably flexible in timings and the learning environment is resourced well.

During the lessons, the less able learners are supported, and if time does not permit, teachers offer a complementary session as a support to help learners achieve better. Teachers also provide continuous useful individually-tailored verbal feedback to learners about their progress and areas of improvement such as experimenting with different materials and always encourage them to read and research. Additionally, at the end of each project or assignment submitted by each learner, a private session is held where a useful and constructive verbal feedback is provided that include identified areas of improvement. Also, teachers often share some useful reading references with the interested learners. As indicated from meetings with learners, learners generally know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. During the exhibition, the institute provides learners and its graduates the opportunity to exhibit and sell their artwork and talk to people about their learning experiences. Nevertheless, these support efforts although provided; they are not systematic enough or part of an explicit support and guidance policy.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

Grade: 3 Satisfactory

The management team who are themselves the sole teachers have clear vision and interest to guide and support learners to develop their individual art approach. However, the formulated strategic objectives are not translated into an explicit improvement action plan. The small management structure is just sufficient for the current size and number of enrolments. However, the management keeps very limited documentations on how they monitor the operation of their provision, although they always have continuous informal reflection on what they do. These are not supported by explicit procedures to ensure more effective monitoring of the performance and the quality of the centre as most practices tend to be informal or *ad hoc*. Very recently the centre started to keep some basic records such as the summary and analysis of the feedback collected from 12 learners collected recently through on-line survey in March 2014. However, follow-up on the outcomes of the survey is not yet available.

Learners' individual work is monitored closely during the class by the teachers. They keep track of the work of each learner from the concept generation to the submission as they spend time with each learner individually to take them through his or her ideas. Furthermore, year-wise comparison of learners' achievements with international pass rates has been produced recently and issues such as the 2013 regression are highlighted and followed up. However, useful and traceable individual learners' progress records are not available. Similarly, records of learners' prior attainment were not available as this is done informally through observing learners' work during the first few lessons and occasionally looking at their previous work but no formal records are kept for this.

Through the school arts exhibition organized annually by the provider, the management creates the opportunity to establish useful links between the centre and local artists as well as the public, as these events are publicized well. The provider also monitors the various local arts events and keeps learners updated and linked with arts community and encourage them to participate in these events. Informal links are also maintained with few segments of stakeholders such the initiative to conduct arts programme for the blinds.

The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) is informative with reference to analysis of learners' achievement and their feedback with a number of relevant areas for development identified. However, the grades are overestimated. The premises is free from obvious hazards and adequate health and safety measures are in place. However, limited written instruction and guidance is

The provider's key strengths

- Learners are self-motivated, enjoy their learning and take pride in their work
- Teachers have relevant theoretical and practical command of their arts specialisms and provide a good role model to learners
- Teachers tailor their teaching to accommodate the needs of all learners in the group and provide useful individual feedback
- Learners' achievement is closely monitored by the management and benchmarked with the relevant international rates.

Recommendations

In order to improve, Al-Madrassa for Arts should:

- ensure that learners make the required progress to achieve their intended qualifications comparable with the international rates
- ensure that progress records are effectively maintained and learners receive more structured feedback on their progress
- ensure that programmes have clear structures, systematically updated and have clear explicit pre-defined assessment criteria shared with learners
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - devising explicit procedures particularly to provide more systematic support and to monitor performance and assure quality
 - introducing more effective action planning to monitor the implementation of strategic objectives and improvements.