



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

Vocational Review Unit

Review Report

Al-Madrassa for Arts

Hamala

Kingdom of Bahrain

Date Reviewed: 12 – 14 December 2011

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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 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

Description of the provision

Al-Madrassa for Arts was established in 2005 as a private company. It is licensed by the Ministry of Education. Initially the centre offered only short courses in arts, but since 2009 the centre has shifted to long programmes in art and design accredited by the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) of the UK. IGCSE, AS and A level programmes in art and design are on offer. In addition to these long programmes, the centre also offers short intensive art workshops in the summer that complement the long programmes. These short courses are not accredited.

The centre is managed and run by a husband and wife, who are also the only teachers at the centre. In the last three years, there have been in excess of 40 students enrolled on different programmes. Al-Madrassa for Arts is located in Hamala village.

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 the managing director, trainers, administration and support staff and learners. .

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

Overall judgement

Effectiveness of provision

Grade 2: Good

The overall effectiveness of Al-Madrassa for Arts is good. The centre offers good quality programmes in the arts, teaches the students and supports them well to achieve good skills and qualifications; the effectiveness of leadership and management is also good overall.

Students at Al-Madrassa develop good skills in art and all of them achieve the qualifications for which they aim. Their results in the externally accredited courses are comparable to the international rates on similar programmes. Students show good self-motivation, and are able to work independently and reflect critically on their work.

Teachers are well qualified, competent in their field and have relevant subject knowledge. They effectively assess every student's individual work, provide helpful and critical feedback to support the less able and challenge the high achievers well in the classes. The lesson planning is, however, not structured enough to make the learning pace more brisk.

Al-Madrassa for Arts offers good quality programmes in niche subjects in the subject area art and design. These are carefully selected, properly structured and well presented. The work of students on these programmes is rigorously assessed by a renowned international body, Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) of the UK. The programmes are further enriched with a suitable range of activities. The course outlines and plans, however, are not clearly communicated to all students or distributed well in advance.

Although the venue is not inspiring enough, especially for the type of courses on offer, and not fully risk assessed, the management team provides good support and guidance to all students based on their abilities and needs. The more talented students receive good challenging support and the less able ones are equally supported to help them achieve their course and personal targets. The leadership and management have thus far been effective in supporting all students and using their professional expertise and links well enough to enrich the learning experience for the students. The management however, do not make full use of the available data to plan for further improvement in a more systematic way.

Capacity to improve

Grade 3: Satisfactory

Al-Madrassa for Art has a satisfactory capacity to improve. The centre has a reasonable history of improvement in the past few years, by adding externally accredited courses and progression routes, as well as enrichment activities. Attendance and punctuality policies have recently been made more stringent.

The students' external examination results show at least a steady profile of positive attainment. The retention rates have improved over the last three years, though it is too early to make a judgement about trends in the success rates from the records of only two years.

The management team are knowledgeable, competent and have a positive vision to improve art teaching. They have a clear vision on how to improve art teaching in general. The team share some promising ideas, but these have not yet been translated into action plans. Also, some ideas are hindered by low demand for art and design courses. The Self Evaluation Form (SEF), which was completed for the purpose of this review, shows an adequate capacity of management to self-diagnose the provision's strengths and areas for improvement.

The strategic planning, on the other hand, is neither systematic enough nor based on formal gathering of stakeholders' views or analysis of available data about the quality of provision.

Summary of grades awarded

Overall Judgement	Grade
Effectiveness of provision	Grade 2: Good
Capacity to Improve	Grade 3: Satisfactory
Review Findings	
How well do students achieve?	Grade 2: Good
How effective is teaching?	Grade 2: Good
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 2: Good

Main judgements and recommendations

Strengths

- **All students achieve the qualifications they aim for; their external examination results are comparable with international success rates.** In IGCSE for example, the percentage of students who achieve “C” grade or higher totalled 71 per cent compared to 66 per cent internationally.
- **Students develop good skills in art and make good progress on their courses.** This evident for example in their art sketch books. Students make good progress and develop positive attitudes to learning as a consequence of the good teaching and effective support they receive.
- **Students are enjoying their learning experience, are self- motivated and able to work independently.** They are able to reflect critically on their and other students’ work. The retention rate is improving in IGCSE level and is high for AS level is.
- **Teachers are well qualified, competent in their field and have relevant subject knowledge; they succeed in engaging and motivating students well.** Teachers’ passion and commitment to their subjects is clearly communicated to students. They strongly believe in students developing their own ideas and techniques in art, which they successfully manage to do.
- **Teachers provide continuous detailed verbal feedback to students and advise them individually to accommodate their varying needs.** This further motivates students to develop their own ideas and become independent learners who are not afraid to experiment, explore and express themselves in their own style.
- **Internationally recognised accredited courses in art and design, which match teachers' expertise, are offered with appropriate intensive short courses and a range of enrichment activities.** The accredited courses in Art and Design are from Cambridge International Examinations (CIE), specialising in painting and drawing at different levels; these match learners’ needs and aspirations as well as the capacity of the centre.
- **Teachers are supportive to students by providing extra time for low achievers and more challenge for the high achievers.** Students are also effectively supported by a highly personalised and individual methodology of

teaching; they are also helped by providing low achievers with extra sessions or time and challenging the high achieving students.

- **Links with professional organisations are used well to enrich programmes with extra-curricular activities.** The management of Al-Madrassa maintains productive links with professional organisations in arts, both governmental and non-governmental, and uses these links properly to enrich programmes with various activities such as art competitions and exhibitions.

Areas for improvement

- **Lesson plans are insufficiently structured; and learning objectives are not shared with students.** In addition, lesson plans do not detail a variety of teaching techniques and activities that could achieve more pace in lessons. A yearly schedule plan is in place but it is not always shared with students.
- **Course outlines and plans are not clearly communicated to all students.** Although students express satisfaction with the courses on offer, some of them have highlighted a need for more information about course content and assessment methods.
- **The learning environment lacks inspiring and stimulating artistic material; and its associated health and safety risks are not fully assessed.**
- **Students and parents' views are not systematically sought and analysed.** The centre has not yet established systems to do this to further improve the provision or to handle any extended complexity of operations in the case of expansion of students, teachers or additional courses.

Recommendations

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

- make teaching more effective by having more structured lesson planning
- make students more aware of learning objectives, assessment criteria and course content by producing more formal documentation to cover these areas
- improve the learning environment by making it more inspiring; and by assessing and resolving all health and safety issues
- inform the centre's plans by more formal collecting and analysing of students' and parents' views.